



FACULTAD DE FILOSOFÍA Y LETRAS  
DEPARTAMENTO DE FILOLOGÍA INGLESA

TESIS DOCTORAL

STAGING THE POWER OF PLACE:  
GEOPATHOLOGY IN SUSAN GLASPELL'S THEATRE

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DIRIGIDA POR:

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UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE MADRID  
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## **TESIS DOCTORAL**



### **STAGING THE POWER OF PLACE: GEOPATHOLOGY IN SUSAN GLASPELL'S THEATRE**

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“We know a small place in a vast unknown. We cherish our small place, for it is all we have of safety, all that is ours of opportunity. But the sense of all the rest is there, sometimes as a loneliness, always an excitement.”

(Susan Glaspell, *Fugitive's Return*)

“A setting is not just a beautiful thing, a collection of beautiful things. It is a presence, a mood, a warm wind fanning the drama to flame. It echoes, it enhances, it animates. It is an expectancy, a foreboding, a tension.

It says nothing, but it gives everything”

(Robert Edmond Jones, *The Dramatic Imagination*).

“ There's no place like home!” (Lyman Frank Baum, *The Wizard of Oz*)

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# INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

Susan Glaspell's appeal is first to the mind, and when she reaches the heart she does so completely and in a way not to be lightly forgotten by those who have yielded to its power. (Royde-Smith 1926: 25)

Susan Glaspell (1876- 1948), who today is still timidly acknowledged as the mother of modern America drama, was once “the great American thinker in dramatic form. She is the spirit and the mind and the soul of the real America of to-day, expressed in literature” (Rohe 1921: 18). Her plays were usually compared to master playwrights, such as Chekhov, Ibsen, Maeterlinck or Shaw.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, her sole work was enough for a critic to justify the existence of the Provincetown Players, the little theatre group that revolutionized the American stage in the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: “If the Provincetown Players had done nothing more than to give us the delicately humorous and sensitive plays of Susan Glaspell, they would have amply justified their existence” (Corbin 1919: np). But it was not only her plays that gave sense to the existence of the Provincetown Players, for Glaspell also constituted a galvanizing force behind the great writers of the group, such as Eugene O'Neill. An early friend of Glaspell described her as “my first heroine in the flesh, a glamorous presence of poetry and romance who fired one's imagination and made all glorious things seem possible. Her personality was a flame in the life of the student body, or at any rate in the group that felt themselves the social and literary leaders” (Fowler 1928: np).

Fortunately, and although a lot of work is still to be done to relocate Glaspell for good in the place in American theatre she once occupied but was banished from,<sup>2</sup> theatre scholars recognise her merit, even if only for her acclaimed one-act *Trifles* (1916). Some of her plays, *Trifles*, *The Outside*, *Inheritors* and *The Verge*, were

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<sup>1</sup> See for instance Corbin 1919: np for a comparison of Glaspell to Maeterlinck, Hedges 1923: 393 for Glaspell's work contribution to the United States similar to that of Ibsen to Norway, “Tchehov and Susan Glaspell” 1929: np, for a comparison of Glaspell to Chekhov, and Edwin Björkman for Glaspell's appraisal as “an American Shaw” (1920: 518).

<sup>2</sup> It must be noted that Glaspell won a Pulitzer Prize in 1931 for *Alison's House*, a prize that she did not only receive for this play, but for her theatre career.

published in an anthology C. W. E. Bigsby edited in 1987,<sup>3</sup> and which certainly encouraged critical works on Glaspell. But as Linda Ben-Zvi has asserted, after Glaspell's resuscitation in the late 1970s and early 1980s through the groundbreaking works of Annette Kolodny (1986) and Judith Fetterley (1986), "Glaspell's criticism has moved to a second stage – assessing the work of this important writer, no longer arguing her case" (1995a: 131). Recently, several works have appeared with the aim of assessing the work of Susan Glaspell from different perspectives. After Veronica Makowsky's comprehensive *Susan Glaspell's Century of American Women. A Critical Interpretation of Her Work* (1993) and Linda Ben-Zvi's much-acclaimed *Susan Glaspell. Essays on her Theater and Fiction* (1995), an anthology quite informed by feminist thoughts, the interest in Glaspell multiplied. Besides the hundreds of articles that have appeared since then, Barbara Ozieblo published the first complete biography of Glaspell, *Susan Glaspell. A Critical Biography* (2000) after the pioneer biography Marcia Noe had published in 1983 under the title *Susan Glaspell: Voice from the Heartland*. The interest created around Glaspell is so important that another biography appeared in 2005, Linda Ben-Zvi's *Susan Glaspell. Her Life and Times*, proving that scholars are eager to know more and more about this author. Lately, excellent critical works have also come out, J. Ellen Gainor's *Susan Glaspell in Context. American Theater, Culture and Politics 1914-48* (2001) was the first work to focus exclusively on the theatre of Susan Glaspell, providing a brilliant and quite exhaustive account of the conditions, ideologies and critical reception surrounding Glaspell's dramatic works. Needed as they were, soon other anthologies appeared. Notably, Martha C. Carpentier and Barbara Ozieblo's *Disclosing Intertextualities. The Stories, Plays and Novels of Susan Glaspell* (2006), which indeed has opened up the scope of critical work to include Glaspell's fiction.<sup>4</sup> Equally important are Carpentier's *Susan Glaspell: New Directions in Critical Inquiry* (2006), an anthology that also gathers brilliant essays on Glaspell's theatre and fiction, and Kristina Hinz-Bode's book *Susan Glaspell and the Anxiety of Expression. Language and Isolation in the Plays* (2006), which focuses intensively on

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<sup>3</sup> Up to date, Bigsby's anthology is the only easily available source for Glaspell's plays. While *Trifles* has been widely anthologised, *Suppressed Desires* can be found in *The Provincetown Players. A Choice of the Shorter Works* (1994) and in Heller and Rudnick's *1915. The Cultural Moment* (1991). Linda Ben-Zvi and J. Ellen Gainor are working on the edition of Glaspell's complete plays, including those never published: *Chains of Dew* and *Springs Eternal*.

<sup>4</sup> It must be noted that the first comprehensive work on Glaspell's novels is Martha C. Carpentier's *The Major Novels of Susan Glaspell* (2001).

Glaspell's use of language "both as theme and as a medium of artistic expression" in her plays (Hinz-Bode 2006b: 5).

The aim of this thesis relates to this second stage in Glaspell's criticism, assessing her dramatic work. Indeed, this thesis goes to one of the core elements of theatre: space. The present research is the fruit of a long path, of profound ruminations on the careful configurations of the stage spaces Glaspell provides in most of her plays. Interestingly, Glaspell once said about her drama, "there is no use repeating old forms. We are changing and we should reflect that change" (qtd. in Rohe 1921: 18). A woman seriously committed to her times, who proclaimed her interest "in all progressive movements, whether feminist, social or economic" and who took "very active part" through her writing (qtd. in Rohe 1921: 18), employed the stage space to mirror the changes she saw around her or the changes that she thought should be made.

Some scholars have suggested the importance that Glaspell provides to the places she recreates onstage in order to understand her characters or the main themes of some of her plays. Linda Ben-Zvi affirms that Glaspell was gifted with "a vivid spatial recall" (2005: 172) she would employ in her plays. J. Ellen Gainor has asserted,

One key achievement of [Glaspell's] drama is her ability to make the stage environment come alive as another player in performance. The vibrancy of place in such works as *Trifles*, *The Outside*, *Bernice*, *The Verge*, and *Alison's House* literally makes the sets she envisions function as characters – not backdrops to the action but central parts of it. (2001: 7)

Scholars' analysis of Glaspell's use of space has focused on specific plays. For instance, Marcia Noe has briefly analysed Glaspell's use of region as a metaphor in *Trifles*, *Inheritors*, *The Outside* and *The Comic Artist* (1981: 77- 85). Space has also been the focus of some articles by Karen Alkalay-Gut (1984: 1- 9), or John Kantack, who claims that in *Trifles* it is the kitchen space which sets the play in motion (2003: 149- 163). J. Ellen Gainor has observed a "thematic relation between setting and action, as for example, the kitchen environment of *Trifles* and the almost anthropomorphized homes" of *Bernice* and *Alison's House*, where the onstage places represent the female protagonists (2001: 75). Gainor has also pointed out that *The Verge* deals "directly with the theme of inside/outside on both literal and metaphysical levels, it also makes use of

the dramatic potential of her set” (1989: 82). And Klaus Schwank, among other scholars, has observed that in *The Outside* there is a strong symbolic relationship between the setting and the action of the play (1989: 413- 421).

Nevertheless, and though space usually has a place in other scholars’ works on Glaspell, it seems that this analysis has not been deep or comprehensive enough. I agree with the importance that these scholars grant to the stage spaces Glaspell configures in her plays, and the aim of the present thesis is to extract the whole marrow from Glaspell’s settings. I agree with Linda Ben-Zvi’s observation that,

The most consistent theme in her fiction and plays is the drive of the protagonists – usually women- to escape forms thrust upon them by the society in which they live. The direction in a Glaspell work is outward, from the confining circle of society to the freedom of ‘the outside.’ (1982: 23)

This thesis offers a deep analysis of Glaspell’s onstage places and the relationships she establishes between these places and her characters and the dramatic development of her plays. More concretely, and given Glaspell’s insistence on the relations between her characters and place, this thesis focuses on the dramatic concept of geopathology, a novel concept never applied to Glaspell’s plays before and which Una Chaudhuri coined in 1995 to account for a common phenomenon in modern drama, featured by the fact that the dramatic action relies heavily on the configuration of characters as victims of location who require to escape. This thesis systematises and enlarges Chaudhuri’s analysis, importantly developing Chaudhuri’s concept to account especially for the case of female characters, given that most of Glaspell’s protagonists are women. Or as an early critic defined them, “the most distinguished achievements in character creation in the entire range of American drama. They are rebels, every one of them – idealistic rebels, and Miss Glaspell bravely centres them in conflicts siding with the idealistic minority, in its struggle with the overwhelming legions who serve Mammon and mediocrity” (Solow 1930: np). This thesis, however, also takes into account Glaspell’s male characters as possible victims of location.

“Staging the Power of Place: Geopathology in Susan Glaspell’s Theatre” is based on a semiotic system of analysis that enables an understanding of all the elements

on stage as signs and thus determining the process of creation of dramatic geopathology. Though I will take into account previous works on Glaspell, as well as the theatrical, cultural, political, and even personal contexts, careful attention is paid to a task not fully completed in previous works on Glaspell, and this is Glaspell's construction of settings through non-dynamic elements (doors, walls, windows, pieces of furniture and stage properties) as well as through the dynamic elements, such as characters and their configuration through costume, their kinesic relations to the place they are in and to other characters. Regarding the methodology sustaining the present thesis, this is mainly dramatic, instead of theatrical. I have not had the opportunity to see any of Glaspell's plays in production. However, I have worked closely with the texts and with pictures of early productions, which helped me to see the exact configuration of the stage spaces as Glaspell probably wanted, and with pictures of real places that might have inspired Glaspell. In the case of *Trifles*, Sally Heckel's wonderful film version *A Jury of her Peers* (1981) also constituted a visual aid for the present study.<sup>5</sup>

The present thesis includes most of Glaspell's plays.<sup>6</sup> But the plays chosen for deep analysis are those set at home: *Suppressed Desires* (1915), written in collaboration with George Cram Cook, *Trifles* (1916), *The Outside* (1917), *Close the Book* (1917), *Bernice* (1919), *Chains of Dew* (1920), *Inheritors* (1921), *The Verge* (1921), *The Comic Artist* (1927), in collaboration with Norman Matson, *Alison's House* (1930), and *Springs Eternal* (1943).<sup>7</sup> These plays have been chosen because they seem to share

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<sup>5</sup> I must thank Marta Fernández Morales for kindly sharing this film with me.

<sup>6</sup> The editions of Glaspell's plays used in the present thesis are: *Plays by Susan Glaspell*. Ed. C. W. E. Bigsby, for *Trifles*, *The Outside*, *The Verge* and *Inheritors*. References to *Suppressed Desires* belong to *The Provincetown Players*. Ed. Barbara Ozieblo. References to *Bernice*, *Woman's Honor*, and *The People* belong to *Plays* (1920). The edition used for *Alison's House* is the one included in *The Pulitzer Prize Plays, 1918- 1934*. Ed. Kathryn Coe and William H. Cordell. For *The Comic Artist* I have used the Ernest Benn edition of 1927. References to *Chains of Dew* and *Springs Eternal* correspond to typescript versions, for which I am very grateful to Barbara Ozieblo. Further references to Glaspell's plays will be given in numbers parenthetically.

<sup>7</sup> The dates given correspond to their first production, but in the case of *Springs Eternal*, never produced, and dated accordingly to its typescript. It must be noted that though *Chains of Dew* was first produced in 1922, which led scholars to think that Glaspell had written it after *The Verge*, Ozieblo discovered that this play was indeed written before, in 1920 (2000: 155). Regarding the plays written in collaboration, *Suppressed Desires* and *The Comic Artist*, though it is impossible to state for sure which parts correspond to Glaspell and which ones to her collaborators, the consistency in the dramatic language and certain set of images compared to other works Glaspell wrote on her own, has led me to consider these plays righteous members for the present analysis of geopathology in Susan Glaspell's plays.

some spatial qualities that set in motion the mechanism of dramatic geopathology, namely, the close relationship between the fictional onstage place, the kind of characters Glaspell puts in these places and the dramatic development of these plays, as well as a stunning spatial language. Three plays will not occupy in a detailed way the corpus of my analysis and these are *The People* (1917), *Woman's Honor* (1918) and *Tickless Time* (1918). *The People* and *Woman's Honor*, though they take place in closed spaces, do not seem to offer many possibilities for a close analysis of dramatic geopathology. *The People* is set in the office of a radical magazine and *Woman's Honor* in the house of the Sheriff. Though set in a house, *Tickless Time*, also written in collaboration with Cook, is constructed on the outside, the garden of an artist couple in Provincetown, and it does not seem to achieve the geopathic atmosphere of the other plays. However, *The People* and *Woman's Honor* will be referred to throughout this research when appropriate. Because, in a subtle manner, these two plays also offer some hints about Glaspell's consciousness about the power of place for characterisation and dramatic development.

The present thesis on dramatic geopathology in Susan Glaspell's theatre is organised as follows: The first two chapters set the theoretical framework of the present research. Chapter 1, The Stage Space in the American Theatre of the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, offers a brief account of the development of the stage space up to the time Glaspell began writing for the Provincetown Players. This chapter focuses especially on how literary streams such as Naturalism or the different Modernisms, as well as political and social movements, shaped the American stage, and concretely, those plays staged by the Provincetown Players. I also provide a brief account of the history of the Provincetown Players, highlighting their commitment to theatrical experimentation and the media they counted on, for these issues would also determine to a great extent the kind of settings Glaspell created. Chapter 2, Towards Geopathology in Susan Glaspell's Modern Drama, discusses definitions of key terms such as space and place, their relationship with other key words in this thesis, such as power, gender politics, roles or performativity, and the extent to which these terms have been studied in drama and theatre studies. This chapter provides the method that supports the present analysis, and explains and discusses the core concepts integrating Chaudhuri's theory of dramatic geopathology. This chapter explains the key role of the figure of home in dramatic geopathology, how *victimage of location* can be achieved dramatically through different means, such as spatial binary oppositions or the buried child image, and how *heroism of departure* is the goal

*geopathic characters* can only dream of. In this chapter I also discuss the relationships between dramatic geopathology, Realism, and feminism.

Chapters 3 to 7 deal with the proper analysis of geopathology in Susan Glaspell's plays. Chapters 3 to 6 cover different approaches to the concept of *victimage of location*, which I then summarise in Appendix 1, in the charts of analysis of dramatic geopathology in Susan Glaspell's plays enclosed. Chapter 3, *American Geomythologies Revisited as Part of Dramatic Geopathology*, deals with Glaspell's revision of American spatial myths, such as the Myth of Mobility, the Pioneer Myth, the American Dream, or the City Upon the Hill. I discuss the way Glaspell shows onstage the clash between the myth of home and the myth of travel so inherent to American culture and tradition, and the outcome of this clash. This chapter pays close attention to the role of the figure of invasion, to displaced characters, and characters ethnically or racially marked as "Others," as part of dramatic geopathology. This chapter also includes a brief section on geopathic disorders linked to the revision of the Myth of Mobility, such as alcohol addiction and smoking. In Chapter 4, *Geodichotomies in the Configuration of Dramatic Geopathology*, I focus on the spatial dichotomies, either physical or verbal, that code the geopathic world of Glaspell's plays. This chapter is divided into sections that deal with different, though closely related, geodichotomies: geographical isolation vs. community; home as prison vs. home as shelter, and inside vs. outside. In this chapter I discuss the consistency of these dichotomies and whether they maintain a fixed meaning in Glaspell's plays.

Chapter 5, *The Burden of the Past in Dramatic Geopathology*, analyses Glaspell's representation of the past onstage, paying close attention to those pasts Glaspell was most interested in portraying: the Pioneer and the Pilgrim Fathers heritages, and how these affect Glaspell's characters to the point of turning them into victims of location. This chapter also focuses on the theory of performativity as related to tradition and heritage and space, that is, how tradition is reaffirmed and reassured in space through the repetition of given acts in given places. I also discuss Glaspell's use of the theme of the generation conflict, enacted in space, as part of her characters' problems with the place they inhabit. Chapter 6, *Imagery of Death in Dramatic Geopathology*, studies physical and verbal spatial images related to death that Glaspell creates in her plays, and which also contribute to the configuration of her characters as



victims of place. This chapter is divided into four sections: home as graves; which focuses on the configuration of the stage space as a physical or symbolic burial ground; the buried child image, which deals with the role of children characters as victims of location or as contributors to geopathology; places of war, discussing Glaspell's treatment of war as a key factor in geopathology, and haunted places, dealing with Glaspell's spatial representation of absent characters onstage. The final chapter of my analysis, Dramatic Principles of Departure, summarised in the chart I provide in Appendix 2, analyses the dramatic means Glaspell employs to solve her characters' *victimage of location*, when possible. This chapter discusses Una Chaudhuri's concept of *heroism of departure* and expands it by basing upon the images, again verbal or physical, that Glaspell creates in her plays to enable her characters to cope with the power of place. Finally, in Conclusions I provide an account of the findings of this research as well as future lines of research originating in the present thesis.

Conforming to the regulations of the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid regarding Ph. D. theses written in any language different from Spanish, I include the summary, introduction, and conclusions of the present thesis in Spanish after my Conclusions.

## **CHAPTER 1**

# **THE STAGE SPACE IN THE AMERICAN THEATRE OF THE EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

# CHAPTER 1

## THE STAGE SPACE IN THE AMERICAN THEATRE OF THE EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY.

I can take any empty space and call it a bare space. A man walks across this empty space whilst somebody else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged.  
(Brook 1972: 11)

From the very birth of theatre, space has always enjoyed a central role. As Peter Brook implies in the quotation above, space is a compulsory element in the theatrical event. Besides audience and an actor, the theatrical experience is impossible unless there is a site where the event can take place. Borrowing Joanne Tompkins's words, while elements such as lights and props may be additional, theatre "cannot exist without space: there must be a location, a venue of some sort in which theatre can occur or, rather, take 'place'" (2003: 537). But in spite of the centrality of the stage space for theatre, the importance that playwrights have given to the stage space throughout history has changed considerably. This chapter describes briefly the elements that helped to configure the American stage spaces of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the kind of sets found at the time Glaspell began writing for the theatre, accounting for the different theatrical, ideological and social influences that have triggered changes in stage spaces. This chapter also points out to the conditions that led to the birth and development of the Provincetown Players for the influence these factors exerted on Susan Glaspell's plays.<sup>1</sup>

It could be said that up to the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the advent of domestic drama, the importance of the stage space relied on the purely material need of a physical place where the performance was to occur.<sup>2</sup> For instance, Arnold Hauser has pointed out how in Classical drama, the fictional place represented onstage was "universal," and thus the

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<sup>1</sup> It must be noted that most of Glaspell's plays were written for the Provincetown Players. *Suppressed Desires*, though presented first to the Washington Square Players, was first produced by the Provincetown Players. The case of *Chains of Dew* is different, because as Ozieblo has observed, Glaspell had in mind Broadway (see Ozieblo 2000: 155, and Ozieblo 2006b: 15), as also the cases of *Alison's House* and *Springs Eternal* are different, since they were created when the original Provincetown Players were over. Nevertheless, the dramatic and theatrical influence that the Provincetown Players exerted on all of Glaspell's plays must be considered.

<sup>2</sup> Since the aim of this chapter is to point to material and ideological criteria that helped to configure Susan Glaspell's dramatic places, and not to give a sound description of the evolution of stage spaces throughout history, I only provide here significant points in such development.

configuration of the stage space was not determinate (1992: 416). A permanent and general *skene* was usually employed, and specific location was suggested by verbal references and stage properties.<sup>3</sup> In spite of the evolution that stage space went through during the Middle Ages, when the wagons in the Mystery plays pageants usually had “elaborate scenery” (Brockett 1995: 95), and the Renaissance, when perspective painting was introduced in Italian theatre, together with innovations in lighting, and fire, smoke and flying machinery, the natural evolution of the stage space towards spectacular elaboration was deterred by the advent of Neoclassicism. As Brockett says, “The aim was to capture the essence of a type of place rather than to re-create features of a particular place. Thus, settings were so anonymous that they could be used in many different plays” (1995: 252).

Before the spatial revolution that would take place with bourgeois drama and Naturalism, with Romanticism “mood” was introduced in set designs at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Emile Zola, though not a devotee of Romantic theatre entirely, still praises “its research into accuracy of costume and setting [to] show the movement’s impulse towards real life” (1992: 355). One of the cornerstones of Romantic drama and this kind of literature in general, indeed, is the use of nature to express characters’ feelings, what in literary analysis is known as *pathetic fallacy*. As Brockett points out, in Romantic theatre uprooting trees, inundating stages and even volcanic eruptions frequently appeared onstage, since they forwarded the plot, besides emphasising spectacularity as one of the motives heading members of the audience to attend performances.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, in this period the panorama and the diorama, painted cloths which brought illusion closer to reality, and which were placed surrounding the audience, were invented. Importantly, during the Romantic period, there begins to be a consistent relationship between setting and characters, and an impulse to make the audience aware of this relationship. These are harbingers for the new kind of drama that was to develop around 1850 and that would also affect the American drama of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The birth of bourgeois drama and Naturalism answers to changes in Western philosophical thought, namely, what Zola has named the shift from “metaphysical man”

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<sup>3</sup> For more information about the configuration of the stage space in Classical theatre and its evolution, see Brockett 1995: 32- 65.

<sup>4</sup> See Brockett 1995: 346.

to “physiological man” (1992: 367). As theoreticians of Naturalism such as Zola, Lukács and Hauser agree on, the changes in life and thought prompted by capitalism and the development of scientific methodologies changed in turn the vision of mankind. The objectification and commodification of human beings and the world we inhabit lead man to “develop a view of life and the world which is inclined toward wholly objective standards, free of any dependency upon human factors” (Lukács 1992: 432). Consequently, space begins enjoying a leading importance because man is considered the unavoidable product of place. Indeed, bourgeois drama is also considered the drama of milieu: “we can say that the drama of individualism (and historicism) is as well the drama of the milieu. For only this much-heightened sense of the significance of milieu enables it to function as a dramatic element; only this could render individualism truly problematic, and so engender the drama of individualism” (Lukács 1992: 434). Hauser would expand on this idea of the drama of milieu:

The bourgeois drama thinks of [man] as part and function of his environment and depicts him as a being who, instead of controlling concrete reality, as in classical tragedy, is himself controlled and absorbed by it. The milieu ceases to be simply the background and external framework and now takes active part in the shaping of human destiny. The frontiers between the inner and the outer world, between spirit and matter, become fluid and gradually disappear, so that in the end all actions, decisions and feelings contain an element of the extraneous, the external and the material, something that does not originate in the subject and which makes man seem the product of a mindless and soulless reality. (1992: 409)

As the emphasis on a dramatic piece was to be changed from universalism to individualism, from abstract feelings to concrete experiences, playwrights started to develop an interest in creating onstage a fictional place that could help spectators to identify the hero or heroine’s drama as soon as the curtain went up. In the words of Zola,

Most of all we would need to intensify the illusion in reconstructing the environments, less for their picturesque quality than for dramatic utility. When a set is planned so as to give the lively impression of a description by Balzac; when, as the curtain rises, one catches the first glimpse of the characters, their personalities and behaviour, if only to see the actual locale in which they move, the importance of exact reproduction in the décor will be appreciated. (1992: 369)

Consequently, the necessary change that takes place onstage in Naturalism is reflected in the profusion of small physical details that are brought to the stage. Replacing the painted tapestries that had mainly constituted the scenography since the late Baroque period, pieces of furniture and stage properties came to invade the stage to “enhance the impression of reality created by the set. [...] They provided indications of the social context, or milieu, that the naturalist movement saw as a crucial factor in determining character and behavior” (McAuley 2000: 170- 171). Naturalistic theatre attempted to show onstage “a slice of life,” thus the illusion of the fourth wall and the detailed construction of the fictional place responding to social accuracy became cornerstones. For naturalistic practitioners and theoreticians the emphasis was placed in the search of “truth” and “accuracy,” (Brahm 1992: 373) primarily reflected in terms of physicality. Great realistic playwright Bernard Shaw summarises his aims as follows,

I created nothing, I invented nothing; I imagined nothing; I perverted nothing; I simply discovered drama in real life.

I now plead strongly for a theatre to supply the want of this sort of drama. I declare that I am tired to utter disgust of imaginary life, imaginary law, imaginary ethics, science, peace, war, love, virtue, villainy, and imaginary everything else, both on the stage and off it. I demand respect, interest, affection for human nature as it is and life as we must still live it even when we have bettered it and ourselves to the utmost. (1992: 194)

As implied in this quotation, the main aim of realistic practitioners such as Shaw was to reflect life as such, leaving imagination aside and highlighting instead environmental determinism. As will be shown later, the realistic settings advocated in Europe in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century will still be in force as far as the North American theatre of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century is concerned.

But as some theoreticians could foresee, the change proposed by Naturalism would not last long. In 1889 Otto Brahm already claimed,

Wherever modern art has applied its most lively energies, it has put down roots in the soil of Naturalism. [...] We are friends of Naturalism and we want to go to a good stretch of the way with it – but we should not be surprised if, in the course of the journey, at some point which we cannot today ascertain, the road should suddenly turn and astonishing new vistas in art and life should emerge. For human culture is bound by no formula, not even the most recent; and in this

conviction, with faith in the Eternally Becoming, we have launched a Free Stage for Modern Life. (1992: 375)

Early deviations from the contemporary trend towards Naturalism can be found in the works of Richard Wagner (1813- 1883), who “argu[ed] that rather than a recorder of domestic affairs the dramatist should be a mythmaker – that he should portray an ideal world through the expression of the inner impulses and aspirations of a people as embodied in its racial myths and so unite them as a folk” (Brockett 1995: 425). Though on the one hand, Wagner sought precise historical accuracy in scenery and costumes, on the other hand, “his conception of the master artwork, unified production, and theatre architecture were to inspire many pioneers of the ‘modern theatre’” (1995: 427). At least, Wagner’s ideology, his sense of unity and theatre as reflection of a group’s impulses and aspirations, would echo in the works of the Provincetown Players. More important for the movement apart from Naturalism is Henrik Ibsen (1828- 1906). His late plays were to influence non-realistic drama, since “In them, ordinary objects (such as the duck in *The Wild Duck*) are imbued with significance beyond their literal meaning and enlarge the implications of the dramatic action,” one of the basic tenets of symbolist drama (Brockett 1995: 431). Similarly, Adolphe Strindberg (1849- 1912) also moved away from Naturalism with his “dream plays,” in which under Maeterlinck’s influence, he “reshaped reality according to his own subjective visions” (Brockett 1995: 446), also coming closer to Symbolism. The spatial use these playwrights displayed to convey Realism with subjectivity would, indeed, influence enormously the work of many North American playwrights, and, among these, many of the Provincetown Players.

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century an interest in creating “emotional” stage spaces appeared. Mere observation and representation onstage were not enough for the new artists who were now interested in representing “reality” as something fragmented and subjective, instead of univocal and universal. As historian Stephen Kern has pointed out, “From around 1880 to the outbreak of World War I, a series of sweeping changes in technology and culture created distinctive new modes in thinking and experiencing time and space” (1983: 1). Inventions such as the telephone, the automobile or the cinema “re-formed our spatial and temporal orientations” triggering new ways “of seeing the world” (Noe and Marlowe 2005: 1). Modernist and avant-garde artists

claimed for new themes, motifs, and artistic techniques to break away from tradition.<sup>5</sup> The realistic onstage details were abandoned in favour of other stage devices that helped to create the emotional atmosphere these playwrights demanded. Related to this, Una Chaudhuri and Eleanor Fuch state that,

landscape has always played a role in the creation of dramatic meaning [...] But we believe that at the threshold of modernism, theater began to manifest a new spatial dimension, both visually and dramaturgically, in which landscape for the first time held itself apart from character and became a figure of its own. (2002: 3)

For modernist playwrights, and unlike the previous realistic tradition, the place represented on the stage space should be both product and producer of character, an element as important as the character itself. That is, the fictional onstage place cannot only anticipate a character's state of being, but it can also become a key element in the dramatic evolution of such a character throughout the play.

Naturalistic theatre began to be attacked from different angles. In Europe, theatre theoreticians, dramatists, stage directors and designers such as Maurice Maeterlinck (1862- 1949), Adolphe Appia (1862- 1928), Edward Gordon Craig (1872- 1966), Max Reinhardt (1873- 1943), Jacques Copeau (1879- 1949) and Vsevolod Emilievich Meyerhold (1874- 1942) dreamed of extinguishing realistic drama, searching instead for a kind of scenography that would enhance the public's imagination, that would involve the audience in what was happening on the stage. The explosion of new technologies allowed theatre practitioners to broaden the possibilities provided by the stage space. Whether referring to symbolist, surrealist, expressionist, futurist or dadaist theatre, or any other style that can be included within the broad terms Modernism and Avant-garde, music and lighting gained then a relevance they had not enjoyed before in theatre, providing the stage space with new dimensions and possibilities. Adolphe

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<sup>5</sup> Jochen Schulte-Sache summarises the differentiation Peter Bürger has made between Modernism and Avant-garde in his *Theory of the Avant-garde* (1984) as follows, "Modernism may be understandable as an attack on traditional writing techniques, but the avant-garde can only be understood as an attack meant to alter the institutionalized commerce with art. The social roles of the modernist and the avant-garde are, thus, radically different" (1992: xv). Though this topic is not the subject of this thesis, it must be noted that J. Ellen Gainor is currently analysing Susan Glaspell's works from the point of view of the Avant-garde.



Appia and Edward Gordon Craig are two important figures among the initiators of this revolution that would soon be exported to the United States:

The fact is that Craig and Appia are the strongest personalities in the idealistic movement which was striving to regenerate the theatre by transforming its aesthetic attitude. [...] Both protested against the enslavement of the theatre and wanted to restore it to the status of a self-contained art. They disliked realism and all its methods – photographic imitation, *trompe l'oeil*, artificial perspective and sham. They declared that suggestion, evocation, symbolical representation, were far better than a slavish reproduction of reality.[...] Both declared that there must be harmony between the various means of stage expression – actors, scene, lighting, etc. – and wanted a three-dimensional stage world. (Bablet 1981: 178)

For Craig, lighting was everything: “The true and sole *Material* for the Art of the Theatre, *Light* – and through light *Movement*” (qtd. in Bablet 1981: 176, author’s emphasis), but not the kind of lighting that realistic playwrights would also employ, that is, to enhance the sense of “reality,” but the kind of lights “to be used in their own right to act on the sensibilities of the spectator and help to convey the central idea of the piece” (Bablet 1981: 42).

Similarly, although Appia’s work has transcended mainly in terms of his ideas on music, his conception of the stage space is important because he “considered painted two-dimensional settings to be one of the major causes of disunity and recommended that they be replaced with three-dimensional units (steps, ramps, platforms) that enhance the actor’s movement and provide a transition from the horizontal floor to the upright scenery” (Brockett 1995: 444). Appia is also one of the originators of the importance that we nowadays grant to lighting. According to Appia,

Light is the most important plastic medium on the stage ... Without its unifying power our eyes would be able to perceive what objects were but not what they expressed ... What can give us this sublime unity which is capable of uplifting us? Light! ... Light and light alone, quite apart from its subsidiary importance in illuminating a dark stage, has the greatest plastic power, for it is subject to a minimum of conventions and so is able to reveal vividly in its most expressive form the eternally fluctuating appearance of a phenomenal world. (qtd. in Simonson 1992: 34)

For Appia and Craig, light had a great suggestive power: “The key of our emotions can be set, the quality of our response dictated, almost at the rise of the curtain by the degree

and quality of light that pervades a scene” (Simonson 1992: 41). Thus, it could be affirmed that Appia and Craig “influenced the trend toward simplified décor, three-dimensional settings, plasticity, and directional lighting” (Brockett 1995: 446). The ideas of these revolutionary theatre theoreticians and practitioners would influence the evolution of the stage space in Europe, as seen in the later works of Bertolt Brecht (1898- 1956), Edwin Piscator (1893- 1966) and Jerzy Grotowski (1933- 1999), among others. Nonetheless, their ideas did not only travel around Europe, but they had a great impact on the evolution of stage spaces in the United States, as seen below.

It could be said that prior to 1915 these new European trends made little impact on the American theatre. Much of the blame is to be placed on the power of “The Syndicate.” This organisation, created in 1896 by Sam Nixon, Fred Zimmerman, Charles Frohman, Al Hayman, Marc Klaw, and Abraham Erlanger, gained control of American theatre by offering a full season of stellar attractions, on the condition that local managers booked exclusively through “the Syndicate.” The Syndicate focused on key routes between large cities, eliminating un-cooperating managers through obscure techniques. The Syndicate refused to accept plays unlikely to appeal to a mass audience and favoured the ‘star system.’ Thus, American theatre remained mostly conservative and commercial between 1900 and 1915. Some opposed the Syndicate. Among them, David Belasco (c. 1859- 1931), with whom “naturalistic detail reached its peak in America.” Although regarding experimentation, “Belasco remained firmly within the nineteenth-century tradition, for he sought merely to bring the maximum of illusion to a repertory”<sup>6</sup> (Brockett 1995: 461).

Nevertheless, all the streams flooding Europe, such as Expressionism, Symbolism, Naturalism or Futurism, found their way into American theatre, while at the same time, the long-established American Realism remained strong. As Jordan Y. Miller claims, two axes divided the American stage. On the one hand, Broadway and its epitome David Belasco dominated the realistic stage, and on the other hand, the

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<sup>6</sup> Brenda Murphy has pointed out that David Belasco’s “feats in New York have become legendary: reconstructing a Child’s restaurant right down to the forks and spoons for *The Governor’s Lady* (1912); rebuilding an entire room from a real boarding house as the set for *The Easiest Way* (1918)” (1987: 21-22). Regarding opposition to the Syndicate, the Shuberts also must be at least mentioned here. The Shubert brothers constructed their own theatres close to those Syndicate-controlled playhouses, but their interest, as that of the Syndicate, might be said to rely on economic profit and spectacle (see for instance Frick 1999: 216- 218).

beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is marked by the proliferation of little theatre groups, which were the ones in charge of bringing innovations to American theatres.<sup>7</sup> Maurice Browne and Ellen Van Volkenberg founded their influential Chicago Little Theatre in 1912, opening with Yeats's *On Baile's Strand* and promptly showing the emergence "of a renewed national American theatre" (Bigsby 1983: 5- 6). Browne and Volkenberg's theatre would have an enormous influence on the future creation of the Provincetown Players, since

Several of the future founders of the Provincetown Players were in Chicago at the time, including the artist Brör Nordfelt, who designed and built the set for the Little Theatre's production of *The Trojan Women* and acted in some productions, as well as Cook, Dell, and Provincetown Players' chief play-reader Edna Kenton. (Murphy 2005: 4)

Also in 1912 the New York Stage Company was established, and so was the Lewisohn Sisters' New York Neighbourhood Playhouse, which grew out of the Henry Street Settlement House, and which was more interested in staging plays that could help the community than in revivifying the American theatre, but whose influence on other little theatre groups was evident. Glaspell herself noted the importance that the Neighbourhood Playhouse had for her idea of theatre, also vital for the Provincetown Players. It was after Cook and Glaspell had seen *Jephthah's Daughter* at the Neighbourhood Playhouse that they "talked of what the theatre might be. It is one of the mysterious and beautiful things of the world, if you are true to the thing you feel, across gulfs of experience you find in another the thing you feel" (Glaspell 1926: 191). Also at this time the New York Liberal Club created its own theatre group, which in 1915 was to be known as the Washington Square Players and endeavoured to produce plays with "artistic merit." The Washington Square Players said in its Aims and Objectives:

We have only one policy in regard to the plays which we will produce – they must have artistic merit. Preference will be given to American plays, but we shall also include in our repertory the works of well-known European authors which have been ignored by the commercial managers. (qtd. in Murphy 2005: 9)

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<sup>7</sup> See Miller 1961: 45- 55.

As a matter of fact, the Washington Square Players did not produce many American plays,<sup>8</sup> but they “became the best New York showcase for European playwrights who worked in the non-representational symbolist mode that would be associated with modernism, playwrights such as Maeterlinck, Andreyev, Schitzler, Wedekind, Evreinov, and the later Strindberg” (Murphy 2005: 9). The same happened to its successor, the Theatre Guild (1919), which, although produced many plays by Eugene O’Neill, was mainly interested in “bringing to the American public the best of the world drama, past and present” (Bigsby 1983: 120). Little theatre groups were flourishing so rapidly across the country that the Drama League of America was officially established in 1910 to coordinate the work of so many organisations.<sup>9</sup>

Without underestimating the work of these little theatre groups, however, the Provincetown Players, born in the summer 1915, stands out as the one that from its very foundation decided to:

establish a stage where playwrights of sincere, poetic, literary and dramatic purpose could see their plays in action, and superintend their production without submitting to the commercial manager’s interpretation of public taste. Equally, it was to afford an opportunity for actors, producers, scenic and costume-designers to experiment with a stage of extremely simple resources- it being the idea of the PLAYERS that elaborate settings are unnecessary to bring out the essential qualities of a good play. (qtd. in Kenton 1997: 34)

This excerpt from the announcement the Provincetown Players made in their first season in New York in 1916 makes explicit their aims: to offer a kind of theatre

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<sup>8</sup> Brenda Murphy asserts that the Washington Square Players produced some short works by American authors, such as Jack Reed’s *Moondown* (1915), Alice Gestenberg’s *Overtures* (1915), Zoë Akins’s *The Magical City* (1916), and, later, plays by such writers as Susan Glaspell, Eugene O’Neill and Elmer Rice. Murphy suggests that it was the Washington Square Players’ policy of rejection of some American plays that triggered the birth of other little theatre groups. Indeed, the Provincetown Players was founded after the rejection of Susan Glaspell and George Cram Cook’s *Suppressed Desires*, Eugene O’Neil’s *Bound East for Cardiff*, and Jack Reed’s *Freedom* (see Murphy 2005: 9).

<sup>9</sup> The Drama League of America, a largely women’s group, became one of the most influential theatre organisations in the 1910s and 1920s. It began in 1910, united sixty-three drama societies, and had a membership of ten thousand. In 1915, membership peaked at one hundred thousand. As Karen Blair claims, “until its demise in 1930, the Drama League of America served primarily as a catalyst in the countrywide explosion of enthusiasm for community amateur theater” (1994: 153). For more information about the Drama League of America and little theatre groups see Blair 1994: 143- 177.

different from the commercial one, i.e. Broadway,<sup>10</sup> and to offer a space to American artists interested in experimenting with the stage. But one more idea would make the Provincetown Players differ enormously from other little theatre groups. Their aim was to create a true and *native* American drama. As Edna Kenton says, “we lamentably lacked a native drama – ‘native’ meaning always that which is spontaneous, free, liberated and liberating, flowing through and from and again into the people and nation concerned” (1997: 18). This is how “the Provincetown aim was different; it was unique. To found a native stage for native playwrights, to maintain in the heart of New York a little laboratory for dramatic experiments – could it be done or couldn’t it?” (1997: 27). The ideology behind the Provincetown Players defended that the American stage needed true, and non-commercial drama, and that this drama had to be *native*, reflective of the American reality, and in continuous dialogue with its people. This emphasis on “native” would have a direct impact on the kind of set designs of many of the plays of the Provincetown Players.

The influence that the new European styles exerted on the little theatre groups such as the Provincetown Players made their way through different paths. Little by little, as pointed out before, challenging groups dared to put onstage European plays. Some European artists and theatre innovators travelled to the United States to lecture or to help to produce plays.<sup>11</sup> Special mention must be made to the visits of the Ballet Russes in 1916 and Jacques Copeau’s troupe between 1917 and 1919. Under the direction of Sergei Diaghilev (1872- 1919), the Ballet Russes toured throughout Europe before coming to the United States, reviving enormously the interest in experimentation with stage spaces:

The scenic style of the Ballets Russes did not depend upon any new technical device, for it relied on painted wings and drops. Nevertheless, it departed markedly from illusionism, since line,

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<sup>10</sup> Indeed, in the “Resolutions” that Jig Cram Cook and Jack Reed wrote before the group moved to New York and the First Manifesto was made public, it was said that “it is the primary object of the Provincetown Players to encourage the writing of American plays or real artistic, literary and dramatic – *as opposed to Broadway* – merit” (qtd. in Kenton 1997: 29, emphasis mine). In *The Road to the Temple* Glaspell also recalls how Broadway plays “didn’t ask much of you,” “Having paid for your seat, the thing was all done for you, and you mind came out where it went in, only tired” (1926: 190).

<sup>11</sup> In *Strange Bedfellows. The First American Avant-Garde* (1991), Steven Watson accounts for the different exchanges that took place among European and American modernists in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. See part “Before 1913. Cradles of Modernism,” pp. 12- 96 for detailed information about this topic.

color, and decorative motifs were considerably stylised to reflect moods and themes rather than specific periods or places. Costumes also emphasized exaggerated line, color, mass. Thus, although the artists drew on familiar forms and decorative motifs, they created a sense of exoticism and fantasy through stylisation. The influence upon European scenic art of the Ballets Russes' designers – among them Leon Bakst, Alexandre Benois, Alexander Golovin, Mstislav Dobuzhinsky, and Natalie Gontcharova – was incalculable. (Brockett 1995: 454- 455)

As for the influence of Jacques Copeau, his 1913 manifesto argued “that a rejuvenation of the drama depends upon a return to the bare platform stage” (Brockett 1995: 458). His Théâtre du Vieux Colombier had “no machinery except for a set of curtains and asbestos hanging which could be moved on rods to effect rapid changes of locale. To these curtains were added only the most essential furniture and set pieces” (1995: 458-459). Copeau's maxim of simplicity conjoins the ideas the Provincetown Players stated in their manifesto, as seen above. New York-based clubs such as Heterodoxy, the A Club or the Liberal Club also contributed enormously to the spread of new forms of art in the United States. Not only did these groups invite European lecturers, but they also became centres where new ideas were discussed.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, new artistic forms also spread due to art exhibitions. It must be acknowledged that the main art exhibition that influenced American artists at the turn of the century was the International Exhibition of Modern Art, commonly known as the Armory Show, a show many of the artists who would be members of the Provincetown Players visited and applauded. Before focusing on the Armory Show, the importance of Sam Hume (1885- 1962), Alfred Stieglitz (1864- 1946) and the Group of Eight must be noted, for their work and their new conceptions of art also influenced the changes in the American stage spaces. After studying stage design in Europe, “in 1914 Hume arranged an exhibit of continental scene design which was shown in New York, Detroit, Chicago and Cleveland. He later was associated with the Detroit Arts and Craft Theatre. There his associated Sheldon Cheney launched Theatre Arts Magazine in 1916, which until 1948 was to be the principal disseminator of new ideas in the United States” (Brockett 1995: 496). Likewise, the importance that photographer Alfred Stieglitz had for the American avant-garde must not be forgotten. His magazine *Camera Work*, first

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<sup>12</sup> These clubs were not merely literary clubs, but they were also interested in discussing and promoting new ideas about politics, feminism, or social care, among other issues. For more information see for instance Schwarz 1986 and Stansell 2000.

launched in January 1903, became the first step towards the New Art. His Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession, a locale commonly known as 291, for it was located at 291 Fifth Avenue, New York City, and founded on November 24, 1905, became a centre for those interested in new perspectives in art:

the primary American campaign for modernism was centered at 291, where such Parisian masters as Paul Cézanne, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, Auguste Rodin, and Henri Toulouse-Lautrec were introduced to New York. It also presented the first American modernists – Arthur Dove, Marsden Hartley, John Marin, Max Weber – and offered the pleasures of ‘minor’ arts such as the caricatures of Marius de Zayas, the visionary theater designs of Edward Gordon Craig, and the photographs of Baron Adolph de Meyer and Alvin Langdon Coburn. (Watson 1991: 70)

As for the Group of Eight, they mounted “the most important avant-garde art show prior to the Armory Show” in 1908 at the Macbeth Gallery (Murphy 2005: 43). This show displayed the group’s rebellion “against the outdated traditions of the national Academy of Design and wanted to broaden the base of American painting” (Wertheim qtd. in Murphy 2005: 44). So even before the Armory Show, American stages were ready to embrace artistic innovations.

The Armory Show was organised by the Association of American Painters and Sculptors, and took place at 69<sup>th</sup> Regiment Armory, New York City, from February 15<sup>th</sup> to March 15<sup>th</sup> 1913, and later moved to Chicago and Boston. After seeing a catalogue of the Sounderbound Show, an exhibition of modern art taking place in Cologne in 1912, Arthur Davies, president of the Association of American Painters and Sculptors, sent Walter Kuhn, its secretary, to Cologne to arrange the shipping of most of the works displayed at the Sounderbound Show to New York.<sup>13</sup> The publicity provided to the Armory Show was so great that salonist Mabel Dodge, closely connected to many of the Provincetown Players, wrote in a letter to Gertrude Stein: “There is an exhibition coming off [...] which is the most important public event that has ever come off since the signing of the Declaration of Independence, and it is of the same nature. [...] There will be a riot and a revolution and things will never be quite the same afterwards” (qtd. in Watson 1991: 172). Hutchins Hapgood, present at the foundation of the Provincetown Players, also talked about it as he “would treat a great fire, an earthquake,

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<sup>13</sup> For more information about how the Armory Show was organised see Brown 1991: 165- 166.

or a political revolution; as a series of shattering events – shattering for the purpose of re-creation” (1939: 341). As Steve Watson claims,

The Armory Show was not simply another wave in the ebb and flow of fashion. It symbolized a seismic dislocation of everything that had ordered the nineteenth-century world, assaulting accepted modes of perception, paradigms of beauty, and standards of morality. To the initiated viewer the Armory Show looked like the apocalypse. To the American avant-garde, the Armory Show meant just the opposite; it was a beginning, not an end. (1991: 172)

According to Milton Brown, “It was, perhaps, the first, great media event in art. But beyond that – a fact that is rarely remembered – it was a coherent and fairly comprehensive, even ‘scholarly’ presentation of the development of ‘modern art’” (1991: 167). The exhibition gathered around 1,300 works of art, mainly European, but it also included some American artists. Among the latter, the Armory Show gave the New York or Ashcan realists the opportunity to show that the United States was also developing an antibourgeois kind of art. The Ashcan realists “wanted to break the grip of bourgeois taste on the ideas of beauty and art [...] by asserting a new vulgarity of topic and vigor of manner – by introducing new subject matters which offended against propriety” (Green 1991: 159). Besides breaking the grip of bourgeois taste on the conception of beauty and art, the importance of the Ashcan School also lay in their search for American themes. They “called attention to the aspects of American life that had been wilfully ignored by the genteel tradition by introducing a gritty new subject matter and painting it with disturbing honesty” (Murphy 2005: 35). It could be said that the aim of the Ashcan School was thus similar to that of the Provincetown Players, to create *native* painting.

But as pointed out before, the great success of the Armory Show relied on the display of radical works of European artists. The exhibition ranged from “old masters” such as Ingres and Eugène Delacroix to modern masters such as Jean-Baptiste-Camille-Carot and Edouard Manet. There was a room devoted to the Impressionists, such as Edgar Degas, Claude Monet, Pierre Auguste Renoir and Camille Pissarro. The Post-Impressionists Paul Gauguin, Vincent Van Gogh, and Paul Cézanne were also generously represented. A side gallery gathered the symbolist works of Odilon Redon. The most popular, and notorious, gallery in the exhibition was the Cubist Room, promptly



labelled the “Chamber of Horrors.” Works by Pablo Picasso, Constantin Brancusi and Marcel Duchamp were exhibited there. Indeed, Duchamp’s *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1912) became the public emblem of modern art.<sup>14</sup>

The Armory Show was a total success. Christine Stansell states that “Some seventy thousand visitors saw the exhibit, goaded by thousands of postcards sent in advance, posters pasted all over the city, and, perhaps most of all, denunciations in the press. The *New York Times* [...] declared the show could ‘disrupt, degrade, if not destroy, not only art but literature and society too’ (2000: 102). As has been highlighted, the Armory Show marked the end of the elitist and conservative American National Academy of Design, and the explosion of modernist art in the United States, and, as the *New York Times* feared, the threat was not only posed towards traditional art, but to the basis of bourgeois society too:

The artists of Modernism broke free by an insurrection within the realm of art, a *coup d’état* which made an enemy enclave within high culture. [...] This was a guerrilla war waged against the bourgeois class and its domination, its representatives in the ateliers, its Renaissance traditions, and its Greek and Roman heritage. The great talents in a sense refused to be adults and citizens; they allied themselves to children, to primitives, to madmen, and against the dominant gender, race, and class. They denied reality via their denial of realism. This was the art which reached the United States in the Armory Show of 1913. (Green 1991: 158)

It must be pointed out that the outcome of the Armory Show does not only mean that the United States was open to European modernisms, but it also constituted the germ for further associations between the artists that visited the show, and these associations had their natural impact in the plays that American dramatists were to write from then onwards, as in the case of the Provincetown Players.

Turning to the development of the North American stage, a special mention is due to the Abbey Players, also known as the Irish Players. The financial lawyer and art-lover John Quinn, indeed a big lender to the Armory Show, sponsored American tours of Irish lecturers and of Lady Gregory’s Abbey Players in 1911-1912.<sup>15</sup> As Adele Heller

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<sup>14</sup> Steve Watson offers a comprehensive account of the works of art exhibited in the Armory Show. See Watson 1991: 166- 172.

<sup>15</sup> See Watson 1991: 174.

says, the plays produced by the Abbey Players “were deeply rooted in the realism of Irish life,” and they showed the group’s “effort to create a national theatre that had both artistic and social aims” (1991: 221). The Irish Players marvelled the audience across the United States. Susan Glaspell and George Cram Cook attended one of the Abbey Players’ performances in Chicago, an experience Glaspell recorded in *The Road to the Temple*:

There were great excitements in Chicago just then. The Irish Players. Quite possibly there would have been no Provincetown Players had there not been Irish Players. What he [Cook] saw done for Irish life he wanted for American life – no stage conventions in the way of projecting with humility true feeling.

Pictures too – the new things. The shock of new forms, and hence awareness of form, the adventure of the great new chance for expressing what has not been formed. (1926: 167)

Floyd Dell, also a member of the Provincetown Players, recalls in his autobiography the “wonderful experience” of “sit[ting] in the gallery night after night and see[ing] the rich world of Synge and Lady Gregory” (1969: 231). Brenda Murphy reflects on the influence of the Abbey Players on the Provincetown Players:

The Irish Players, with their amateur origins, their dedication to drama as a literary art form, their cultural nationalism, their refusal to embrace theatrical convention, and their determination to break new ground in a broad spectrum of drama from the folk plays of Synge, Lady Gregory, and T.C. Murray to the modern, symbolic, ‘Noh’ theatre of Yeats, provided a strong precursor and direct model for the Provincetown Players. In their dedication to encouraging ‘the writing of American plays of real artistic, literary, and dramatic – as opposed to Broadway – merit,’ the Provincetown Players were carrying out an American version of the Abbey Players’ mission. (2005: 4)

But the European influence did not only come from the trips of European artists to the United States or because their works of art travelled to the American continent, since there were many American artists that travelled to Europe and came back home to share and practice what they had learned from European artists. For instance, among others, Hutchins Hapgood travelled around Europe, and so did Susan Glaspell. Accounting for Glaspell’s trip to Europe, Linda Ben-Zvi affirms,

In her first five months in Paris, the sixth Salon d'Automne at the Grand Palais showed over 2,000 works by more than 600 artists, including Matisse, and leading galleries such as Kahnweiler, Druet, Bernheim-Jeune, and Notre-Dame-des-Champs offered paintings by Braque, Odilon Redon, van Dongen, Dufy, Derain, Marquet, and Picasso. [...] Five years before the Armory Show brought this new art and theory to America, Susan was able to see it and to read about the assaults upon form and subject matter and about the ascendancy of expressionism, which would find subtle parallels in her own work when she turned to the stage and wrote some of the earliest expressionist dramas in America.

Art was thriving in Paris and so was theatre, the most popular form of entertainment at the time. The plays of Ibsen, Strindberg, Hauptmann, and Maeterlinck were already familiar to the French public. (2005: 95)

Two other theatre practitioners who shared their knowledge of the modern European theatre and exercised a great influence on the development of the modern American theatre were George Pierce Baker (1866- 1935) and Robert Edmond Jones (1887- 1954). George Pierce Baker was a theatre scholar who promoted new forms of writing for the North American theatre. He was a teacher at Harvard, Radcliff and Yale. At Harvard Baker he founded the influential playwriting workshop Course 47 in 1905, and the specialised English 47 in 1915,<sup>16</sup> and he had pupils who would become famous playwrights, such as Edward Sheldon and Eugene O'Neill,<sup>17</sup> also one of the Provincetown Players. Far from the escapist fashion of Broadway plays, one of the main pieces of advice Baker provided his students with was: "Write what you know to be true about your characters, and write nothing that you do not know to be true," "Get your material from what you see about" (qtd. in Gelb and Gelb 2000: 431). Certainly, this piece of advice would become pivotal in the creation of a native American drama, as seen in the goals stated by the Provincetown Players above, for instance.

The development of the "New Stagecraft" owes a lot to Robert Edmond Jones. Winthrop Ames (1871- 1937), however, must also be credited for the rooting of scenic innovations in the United States. Ames had studied the new trends in stage design in Europe and in 1909 was employed to manage the New Theatre in New York. He later

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<sup>16</sup> Baker planned English 47 to be an advanced course in playwriting. It consisted of four students who had taken Course 47 with distinction. For more information about this issue see for instance Gelb and Gelb 2000: 430- 433, 451- 483.

<sup>17</sup> According to O'Neill's biographers, Arthur and Barbara Gelb, O'Neill admitted several times that he had not learned much from Baker's course, but "O'Neill did acknowledge it was from Baker that he grasped the essential technical procedure of writing a scenario before attempting any actual dialogue – a rule he followed with only rare exceptions throughout his career" (2000: 466).

opened the Little Theatre, “where in the years before the First World War he produced plays in the new style. Besides, in 1912 he imported Reinhardt’s production of *Sumurun*, fostering an interest in European ideas” (Brockett 1995: 496). As advanced earlier, Robert Edmond Jones marked a revolution with his “New Stagecraft.” “[His] design for Anatole France’s *The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife* (1915) signalled a major reform of the United States stage design” (*The Penguin Dictionary of the Theatre* 2004: 313). He studied with Max Reinhard in Germany, and was a follower of Craig, Appia and Copeau. Indeed, his ideas on the creation of atmospheric stage spaces instead of realistic ones are quite similar to the ones quoted previously by these theoreticians. Jones agrees with them on the belief that “When the curtain rises, it is the scenery that sets the key of the play. A stage setting is not a background; it is an environment. Players act in a setting, not against it” (1985: 23- 24). Moreover, for him, “A setting is not just a beautiful thing, a collection of beautiful things. It is a presence, a mood, a warm wind fanning the drama to flame. It echoes, it enhances, it animates. It is an expectancy, a foreboding, a tension. It says nothing, but it gives everything” (1985: 26). As Craig and Appia, Jones also provides lighting with a leading role for the configuration of settings:

Lighting a scene consists not only in throwing light upon objects but in throwing light upon a subject. [...] The objects to be lighted are the forms which go to make up the physical body of the drama – the actors, the setting, the furnishing and so forth. But the subject which is to be lighted is the drama itself. We light the actors and the setting, it is true, but we illuminate the drama. We reveal the drama. We use light as we use words, to elucidate ideas and emotions. Light becomes a tool, an instrument of expression. (1985: 118- 119)

Robert Edmond Jones was present at the very birth of the Provincetown Players. In the mythical summer night of 1915 when the Provincetown Players were born, Jones created the first scenery for Neith Boyce’s *Constancy* and Susan Glaspell and George Cram Cook’s *Suppressed Desires*. The theatrical event that night took place in the house of Neith Boyce and Hutchins Hapgood, “a rambling old house by the sea, with a great living room large enough to hold a few players and a fair audience” (Kenton 1997: 19). As Edna Kenton points out, Robert Edmond Jones, “with no lighting equipment or scenery, planned nevertheless the sets and lights” (1997: 19). Kenton details Jones’s efforts as follows,

*Constancy* called for a sea set, and when the first night audience gathered one evening in early July, they faced a set and lighted stage – the Hapgoods’ seaside veranda. The wide doors opening onto it made the proscenium arch, the sea at high tide the backdrop and the sound of its waves the orchestra, while Long Point Light at the tip of Cape Cod carried the eye ‘beyond.’ The properties were a long low divan heaped with bright pillows. Two shaded lamps, one on either side of the doorway, were the ‘lights.’ No amount of *décor* could have added a stroke of beauty to the simple, lovely setting in which the two Hapgoods, Neith and Hutchins, played the little marital drama written by one of them.

*Suppressed Desires* demanded an interior, and when *Constancy* drew to its triumphant, curtainless end and the audience was invited to rise and swing its chairs around to face the second stage – an alcove room through which Bobby Jones had been noiselessly moving with candles and lamps. Already, in 1915, in America, on Cape Cod, the idea of the ready-set revolving stage was in the air, even though in this occasion it was the audience which revolved – to witness what no one there even faintly dreamed of calling the ‘world premiere’ of *Suppressed Desires*. (1997: 19- 20)

The very first productions of the Provincetown Players, including one play by Susan Glaspell, were already based on the factors which would become the hallmarks of the group: simplicity, suggestive setting and maximum exploitation of basic resources. Though the career of Jones developed mainly in big theatres, he would collaborate with the Provincetown Players. For instance, Jones worked with Cleon Throckmorton to design the settings of Eugene O’Neill’s great success *The Hairy Ape* (1921), and he would be O’Neill’s main designer throughout his career.

Jones was also present at another key moment in the evolution of the stage space in the United States: the Paterson Strike Pageant, a great performance that took place in New York on June 7<sup>th</sup> 1913, and that showed the amazing possibilities that the North American stage had, in terms of what it could offer both thematically and formally, and which also influenced the birth of the Provincetown Players. In 1913 there was a galvanizing strike of silk workers in Paterson, New Jersey. Bill Haywood, one of the leaders of the Industrial Workers of the World, told Hutchins Hapgood, Mabel Dodge and John Reed the disgraceful events that had taken place in Paterson. Answering back to the workers’ protest against the closing down of three hundred mills, as well as to the workers’ claims for fairer wages and an eight-hour workday, the police displayed brutality. A worker died, many strike leaders were arrested, and free speech was

restricted.<sup>18</sup> Immediately, Mabel Dodge and her friends decided to stage a pageant in Madison Square Garden, with strikers acting out their own strike before a New York audience. The main aims were to raise funds for strikers, and to bring the situation of the workers to the attention of New Yorkers. It constituted “a full integration of labor politics with bohemian theatrics” (Stansell 2000: 183):

With a cast of over a thousand workers, Reed’s old Harvard chum Robert Edmond Jones [...] staged the drama in the manner of German director Max Reinhard: a spectacle featuring huge crowds milling around expressionist sets designed by another Harvard comrade, the action moved along by stentorian speeches delivered through bullhorns, all against towering backdrops painted by John Sloan. The pageant pleasingly evoked those modernist forms from the Continent that the Armory Show was displaying at almost the same moment. (2000: 184)

Steve Watson comments on the outcome of the Paterson Strike Pageant, highlighting the huge coverage it had from the press. Significantly, most of the reviewers “were drama critics evaluating the heartfelt performance,” calling the readers’ attention towards the effects gained by “avant-garde theatricality” (1991: 148). Indeed, “the aim [of the Paterson Strike Pageant] was the kind of authenticity, simplicity, and unity of effect that Gordon Craig and the practitioners of the New Stagecraft were calling for in Europe” (Murphy 2005: 6). Furthermore, the pageant, as Watson points out, inspired Villagers to pursue their own theatrical vocation. He states that, for instance, George Cram Cook and Susan Glaspell

were so deeply moved by the event that they stayed up late into the night imagining what America’s new theater could become. As if predicting his own future with the Provincetown Players, Cook had written a few days earlier, ‘It is possible that this pageant with a purpose may fail suggestively – that the impulse it generates may later be refined by greater artistic skill.’ (1991: 149)

The Provincetown Players is the product of the revolutions that were taking place in different realms of the United States, just as the Paterson Strike Pageant also was: “The Paterson Strike Pageant prepared the way for the Provincetown plays. It was a mixture of art, politics, and social intrigue, as were the first plays” (Egan 1994: 106). This little theatre group aimed to reflect the reality of their country, at the same time that it

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<sup>18</sup> For a more detailed account of these events see for instance Watson 1991: 138- 140.

intended to help develop the American Avant-garde.<sup>19</sup> As Murphy points out, “the aesthetic principles of the pageant also foreshadow those of the Provincetown Players” (2005: 5).

As explained above, the group was born out of its members’ conviction that the American stage had to be renewed, and in spite of financial shortcomings, the Provincetown Players endeavoured to configure the stage spaces of their plays departing from the rules of Broadway and pure Realism. The diversity of its members called for very different kinds of sets. The varied formal interests of the members, which ranged from Symbolism, to Expressionism, and still Realism, among others, had their way on the Provincetown Players’ stage as long as they contributed one way or another to the group’s artistic and ideological goals. Naturalism can still be sensed in apparently deterministic sets, such as Rita Creighton Smith’s *The Rescue* (1918) and Eugene O’Neill’s *Bound East for Cardiff* (1916). But other sets, realistic at first sight, are indeed employed to subvert the drama of milieu, the determinism that race, gender, or social class enacted on physical places and the characters placed in them, as in the case of Glaspell’s *Trifles*, which will be amply discussed throughout this thesis. Moreover, the productions of the Provincetown Players also include the expressionist *Emperor Jones*, by Eugene O’Neill, the symbolist *The Game* by Louise Bryant (1916), or the harlequinade *Aria da Capo* (1919) by Edna St. Vincent Millay.

While the first stage of the Provincetown Players was the Hapgoods’ cottage in Provincetown, its second Provincetown stage revealed the importance the group granted to the physicality of the stage space and its aim to create a native drama. Romantically, Edna Kenton recalls the Wharf Theatre in the following terms: “Old fish houses must have been constructed originally with some idea of a native theatre in mind – they are so

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<sup>19</sup> It must be noted that although the direct influence that the Paterson Strike Players exerted on the birth of Provincetown Players cannot be denied, pageantry in general can be considered the seed for the little theatre movement. To support her point that little theatre groups are “a positive evolution of pageantry,” Karen Blair establishes all the parallels existing between both movements, such as how both “capitalized on the allure of story line, combined with color, costume, music, poetry, dance, and dramatic conflict, to absorb the players and the audience,” both “hoped to challenge the shallowness of commercial offerings by creating more ambitious alternatives and consciously developing material that was both wholesome and provocative,” they “bemoaned the audience passivity that modern commercial entertainments invited” and “utilized the womanpower of leisured middle-class women” (1994: 144). For more information see Blair 1994: 118- 142, and 143- 177.

native themselves to shore and sea” (1997: 20). Mary Heaton Vorse, the owner of the wharf, recalls this theatre and its stage space,

Our wharf, with the fishhouse on the end, was conveniently at hand to serve as a theater. The fishhouse was a hundred feet long and fifty feet wide.<sup>20</sup> It had a dark, weathered look, and around the piles the waves always lapped except at extreme low tide. There was a huge door on rollers at the side and another at the end which made it possible to use the bay as a backdrop. The planks were wide and one could look through the cracks at the water. The color of the big beams and planks was rich with age.

We drag out the oats and nets which still stood there. We all made contributions to buy lumber for seats and fittings. We made the seats of plank put on sawhorses and kegs. We ransacked our houses for costumes and painted our own scenery. Our first curtain was a green rep curtain my mother had made for me for ‘theatricals’ in our attic in Amherst. Out of these odds and ends we made a theater, which was to have such unsuspected and far-reaching effects beyond the borders of Provincetown.

The night for the first performance came. Four people stood in the wings with lamps in their hands to light the stage. Lanterns with tin reflectors were placed before the stage like old footlights [...] and with these lights the fishhouse took on depth and mystery. (1991: 118)

As Edna Kenton points out, the “possibilities [of the wharf theatre] were never exhausted; it gave a variety of settings that was really remarkable for so small a stage” (1997: 21). Glaspell also says that the stage “was in four sections, so we could have different levels, could run it through the big sliding-door at the back, a variety of set surprising in quarters so small” (1926: 194). The fact that the Provincetown Players did not have many financial resources did not deter their aims, since all that mattered was that they did have a stage. As Cook summarised the Provincetown Players’ enterprise: “Money cannot create a thing like this – it is born of the spirit” (qtd. in Glaspell 1926: 236).

Susan Glaspell’s recreation of how she came to write *Trifles* evinces the importance that the stage space had for her. Protesting against her husband’s announcement that she had a play for the next bill, when she had not any and she did not feel able to write a play on her own, George Cram Cook simply told her: “You’ve got a stage, haven’t you?” (1926: 196). The story of the birth of *Trifles* goes as follows,

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<sup>20</sup> Robert Sarlós corrects the dimensions of the wharf shed. He states that the wharf was between twenty-four and twenty-six feet wide, thirty-four to thirty-six feet long, and twenty-four to twenty-six feet high (1982: Appendix C).



So I went out on the wharf, sat alone on one of our wooden benches without a back, and looked a long time at the bare little stage. After a time the stage became a kitchen, - a kitchen there all by itself. I saw just where the stove was, the table, and the steps going upstairs. Then the doors at the back opened, and people all bundled up came in – two or three men, I wasn't sure which, but sure enough about the two women, who hung back, reluctant to enter the kitchen. When I was a newspaper reporter out in Iowa, I was sent down-state to do a murder trial, and I never forgot going into the kitchen of a woman locked up in town. I had meant to do it as a short story, but the stage took it for its own, so I hurried in from the wharf to write down what I had seen. Whenever I got stuck, I would run across the street to the old wharf, sit in the leaning little theatre under which the sea sounded, until the play was ready to continue. Sometimes things written in my room would not form on the stage, and I must go home and cross them out. 'What playwrights need is a stage,' said Jig, 'their own stage.' (1926: 196- 197)

Though it might be possible that Glaspell's memories of how she came to write *Trifles* could be biased by the love she professed for her deceased husband, for indeed *The Road to the Temple* is a hagiography of George Cram Cook, Glaspell's explanation of her writing process does reveal the importance of the stage in her dramatic works. As seen above, the stage is such a powerful element that it "takes hold" of Susan Glaspell, and the idea she had kept for a short story becomes a play first. Moreover, it is important to notice how it is the stage space that inspires her creation. Alone in the wharf theatre, the bare stage began to be imaginarily equipped by pieces of furniture, till finally characters appeared. Furthermore, Glaspell makes explicit how things could work out in her mind, but as soon as she tested them on the stage she could change her mind. It is also interesting to note how Glaspell recalls Cook stating the relationship established between the stage and the kind of plays the Players produced: "The needs of our plays have suggested this new form of theatre; the new theatre will, in turn, suggest new forms of plays" (qtd. in Glaspell 1926: 237).

When the Provincetown Players moved to New York City in 1916, the place they managed to rent at 139 MacDougal Street was not much better than the Wharf theatre. As Kenton claims, "Even the most modest of sets, the barest of stages, gave on our stage area of twelve feet by ten feet six inches, room for hardly more than a trio of players"<sup>21</sup> (1997: 51). Ben-Zvi comments, "By the standard of other acting spaces in New York, 139 was Spartan; in fact, it wasn't a theatre at all but a series of three rooms,

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<sup>21</sup> Ben-Zvi states that "The stage was 14-by-10 1/2 feet" (2005: 180).

two parlors and a dining room, twenty-four-feet wide and eighty-one-feet deep, with a narrow hallway running along the side, used later for access to the auditorium and stage” (2005: 180). Thanks to the feverous work of the artists of the group, some improvements were made: “The benches painted lavender, the walls dark dull gray, with emerald green doors and panelling, the arch-way over the stage, gold squares and purple design at each side, and the curtain a wonderful royal purple affair with a cerise band across it” (Mary Pyne to Mary Heaton Vorse qtd. in Ben-Zvi 2005: 181).

As for the Players’ final move to 133 MacDougal Street in 1918, Kenton stills emphasises, “No, we had few resources, few actors, no money. All we had was a stage” (1997: 120). Helen Deutsch and Stella Hanau describe the Playwrights’ Theatre as follows,

a four-story dwelling of pre-Victorian days. Although it had been successively a storehouse, a bottling-works and a stable, its upper floor still retained the charm of high ceilings, dignified mantels and finely-wrought lintels and doorposts. The Players turned the basement into workshop and storeroom [...] The ground floor became the stage and the auditorium. They cleaned it up, built a sloping floor, and installed benches, uncushioned, unnumbered and without backs. One reminder of the stable was left undisturbed- a hitching ring firmly embedded in the right wall of the auditorium. The resourceful Players polished it and inscribed on the wall above it, ‘Here Pegasus was Hitched.’ A portion of what once had been the sloping entrance ramp to the stable was made into a diminutive box-office – the first in the story of the theater – and the rest of the ramp became the lobby. (1972: 45)

Thanks to the investment of Dr. A. C. Barnes, a collector of modern art from Philadelphia, the Provincetown Players could rent this building, whose stage now “measured 22’ 10’’ – by – 22’ deep” (Ben-Zvi 2005: 209), and make some amendments. As with the theatre at 139 they also gave importance to the decoration of the auditorium. The seats were painted black; the walls orange/brown, and the proscenium neutral grey.<sup>22</sup> But more importantly,

We installed house lights and finally succeeded in shading them; we installed a ‘dimmer’ so that they could fade slowly out; we installed an extraordinarily large and dependable switchboard; we decided that we could not afford ‘rose lights.’ We had a curtain at last that worked smoothly and did not excite the audience to cheers by its eccentric hitchings along its rods. (Kenton 1997: 86)

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<sup>22</sup> See Ben-Zvi 2005: 209.

Little by little the plays of the Provincetown Players could count on more “sophisticated” means for the places represented on the stage space. This of course depends enormously on finances, but it must be highlighted that, apart from the imagination of its playwrights, the Provincetown Players included artists from different realms ready to put their minds to work even with the minimum resources. Apart from the applauded stage designers Robert Edmond Jones and Cleon Throckmorton, many other artists, and most of them women who rarely appear in the stories about the Provincetown Players, also collaborated to shape superbly the stage space. As Cheryl Black points out, “Apparently, playwrights recruited scenic designers from among the group’s most likely candidates, usually painters. In the fall of 1916, the company established a ten-member scenic committee headed by Brör Nordfelt” (2002: 112). Apart from Nordfelt, other famous painters who worked with the Provincetown Players included William Zorach, and Wilbut Daniel Steele. Between 1916 and 1919 women who designed scenery for the Provincetown players included Marguerite Zorach, Alice Hall, Margaret Swain, Edith Haynes Thompson, Louise Heelstrom, Flossette Florence Heaton, and a ‘Miss Whittredge.’<sup>23</sup>

The Provincetown Players reached a climax as far as scenery is concerned with the construction of a dome. If up to 1920 the group had managed to explore the possibilities of the stage spaces they had, almost exclusively counting on their own inventiveness and the plastic qualities of the painters working with the group, George Cram Cook marked a turning point in the history of theatre in the United States with his dome. After reading Eugene O’Neill’s *The Emperor Jones*, Cook became obsessed with the idea that this play required a dome. Cook himself built the plaster cyclorama, which swallowed all the money the group had then. “Thanks only to him, *The Emperor Jones* had his dome, Gene had his dome, we had our dome, New York had its dome – the only one in all its packed Rialtos – and the rest is history” (Kenton 1997: 126). James Light describes the dome against the regular cyclorama as follows,

It was of rigid iron and concrete construction; it eradicates all the failings of the cloth cyclorama. It will not wrinkle, it will not move when touched. It radiated light where a cloth cyclorama absorbs light. The cloth cyclorama has a curve in only one direction; the dome has a constant

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<sup>23</sup> For more information about the women designers of the Provincetown Players see Black 2002: 112-132.

curve in every direction. It requires, as we have installed it, no masking or very little, and because of the peculiarities of our stage it is never in the way. The constant rate of change in direction of the surface of the dome is what gives the sense of infinity. The light rays strike along this curve and are reflected in millions of directions. Every light ray, as it strikes the small particles of sand finish, casts its shadow as a complementary color. The mingling of a colored light with its complementary shadow produces, with the constant curve of surface, the effect of distance, and makes the dome appear what in reality is – a source of light. It changes all our ideas of setting plays. (qtd. in Deutsch and Hanau 1972: 61- 62)

The success of *The Emperor Jones* owes a lot to the dome, and curiously, O'Neill's success marked the decline of the Provincetown Players. More and more often members of the group, and above all O'Neill, received proposals to have their plays produced in flashing Broadway. But anyway, the creation of the dome also meant new possibilities for later plays, since for instance it would be used again in Susan Glaspell's *The Verge*, whose expressionistic set design was also widely applauded.

To conclude, this chapter has described briefly the influences and factors determining the configuration of stages spaces in the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century United States. Firstly, I have offered an account of the most significant periods when stage spaces experienced changes, namely, Romanticism and Naturalism. With Romanticism the set was used to suggest characters' mental state, and with Naturalism, stage spaces came to be heavily decorated in many cases to show the determinism of place over characters. Both styles will be important for the present study on geopathology, as the following chapter explains. Then, as seen in this chapter, Naturalism was confronted by different modernisms, which aimed to show onstage not only the influence that place may have on characters, but also the changes that may be enacted on places. Modernist techniques sought to find new ways to make spectators realise the important matters around them and their necessary participation in the world they inhabit. With the profusion of art exhibitions and the intellectual exchange of ideas, all these new and old ideas and theatrical forms arrived in New York, where artists adopted them depending on their own political, social and also economic positions. The final part of this chapter has focused on the conditions of the Provincetown Players in order point to the material, ideological and artistic basis that would encompass the plays of Susan Glaspell. As seen in this chapter, and taking into account the economic and spatial restrictions that they had sometimes, the Provincetown Players allowed artistic liberty to a great extent, as

long as the plays were related to the idea of America somehow; and that they demanded the intellectual participation of the audience, maxims that Glaspell respected to the end. The following chapter analyses the basis for the present study of dramatic geopathology in Susan Glaspell's plays, the tools that will enable us to disentangle the complex relationships Glaspell establishes between her settings and her characters.

## **CHAPTER 2**

# **TOWARDS GEOPATHOLOGY IN SUSAN GLASPELL'S MODERN DRAMA**

## CHAPTER 2

### TOWARDS GEOPATHOLOGY IN SUSAN GLASPELL'S MODERN DRAMA

Though as argued earlier, the stage space has been favoured with an important role in theatre for centuries, it has not been until recently that theatre theoreticians have begun to focus on the relevance of space in theatre and drama studies. In the latest theatre theories a growing interest in developing the concept of 'space' has arisen. The sources scholars use vary immensely and range from very different frameworks, such as arts, literature, geography, architecture, politics or economics. The works of philosophers such as G. W. F. Hegel, Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, Jean-Paul Sartre, Michel Foucault or Henri Lefèbvre, to name just a few, have been discussed in relation to the implications of space and place in theatre. As Una Chaudhuri has pointed out, the discourse of geography in theatre now includes a whole range of spatial metaphors such as "*borders, limits, rootlessness, territoriality, nomadism, habitus, home, homelessness, and exile*" (2000: xi, author's emphasis). However, one of the main problems when adopting this terminology comes from defining these very terms. Indeed, there is no agreement about the basic definitions of space and place. This chapter begins by offering a succinct summary of the different definitions of space and place, and their relationship to other notions, such as power, ideology, identity, and gender politics, which are used in this thesis to analyse dramatic geopathology. Once these issues have been discussed, this chapter describes the different perspectives from which space and place can be seen in theatre and drama studies. A brief account of semiotic tools to read spatial signs will be studied at this point, as well as a taxonomy of the different approaches to space and place that are possible in theatre and drama studies. Then, the present analysis of place and space in theatre will discuss the concept of "Landscape theatre," a broader term that would assimilate dramatic geopathology. Finally, this chapter explains and discusses the core concepts integrating dramatic geopathology, and the relationships between geopathology, Realism, and feminism.

Traditionally definitions of space have developed according to two opposed conceptions of its nature. Newtonians have treated space as a real entity to be filled by atoms and planets. The view of Leibniz, however, was that space was an idea rather than a thing. Following this opposition, Sack has identified two schools of thought: "spatial separatists" and "chorologists." The school of "Spatial separatists" holds "that

the spatial questions are about a separate subject matter – space; and that this subject matter required a separate kind of law or explanation – *spatial laws* and *explanations*” (qtd. in Kirby 1982: 4, author’s emphasis). For spatial separatists space is a separate virtual abstraction. On the other hand, chorology, a counterpart to chronology, focuses on “the production of specific places, areas or regions, parallels the production of specific times such as era or epoch in history” (qtd. in Kirby 1982: 4). While chorologists can draw upon any method or body of knowledge to assist in their study, the relativist view of space understands space as an object of study in its own right that requires the development of their own spatial laws.

The relativist view of space has lately been strongly attacked. Philosophers such as Edward Soja and Henri Lefèbvre reject the assumption that space can exist as an independent artefact. From this rejection a very interesting stream of thought is born. Whether taking space as a virtual abstraction, as Soja does,<sup>1</sup> or as a reality, as it is Lefèbvre’s standpoint, the common thread is that there is a strong relationship between space and social relations. In this concern, I find Dean Wilcox differentiation between space and place highly useful. After considering different definitions of space and place, Wilcox offers a satisfying description of these terms that many scholars follow: “place is viewed as defined, specific, occupied, whereas space offers the potential for occupation, which endows it with the infinite quality of emptiness” (2003: 543). That is, space is a more abstract term and place is the precise configuration of space in a precise time. The concept of space potentially offers the schema for social relations, while place provides the actual possibility to analyse such relations. For instance, cultural geographers see places as truthful and unavoidable traces of human evolution,<sup>2</sup> or as Donald Meinig puts it, place is “a definite area, a fixed [and experiential] location” dependent upon “experience and purpose” (1979a: 3). Similarly, Lefèbvre points out that “(*social*) *space is a (social) product* [that] serves as a tool of thought and of action,” “it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power” (1991: 26, author’s emphasis). But he also wonders, “Is space indeed a medium? A milieu? An intermediary? It is doubtless all of these, but its role is less and less neutral, more and

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<sup>1</sup> For further information about Edward Soja’s point on space as a virtual abstraction see Soja 1980: 207-225.

<sup>2</sup> See for instance Meinig 1979b and Conzen 1994.



more active, both as instrument and as goal, as means and as end” (1991: 411). According to this philosopher,

That space signifies is incontestable. But what it signifies is dos and don'ts – and this brings us back to power. Power's message is invariably confused – deliberately so; dissimulation is necessarily part of any message from power. Thus space indeed 'speaks' – but it does not tell all. [...] Space is at once result and cause, product and producer; it is also a *stake*, the locus of projects and actions deployed as part of specific strategies, and hence also the object of *wagers* on the future – wagers which are articulated, if never completely. (1991: 142- 143, author's emphasis)

It must be noted that Lefèbvre does not make any distinction between space and place, and that he refers to space in instances when, according to Wilcox's definitions above, Lefèbvre is referring to exact configurations of space, and thus to places. Many scholars, such as Michael Keith and Steve Pile (1993) and Doreen Massey (1998), support Lefèbvre's standpoint about space as a social product or producer, but they prefer using the term place when talking about definite cases. These scholars agree with Michel Foucault's denouncing that “Space was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile” (1988: 70). Contrary to the standpoint of cultural geographers such as Meinig, I side with this other idea that space/place cannot be thought of as a fixed and unmovable terrain, as a mere reflection of human actions and thoughts. Space/place must be regarded as open and changing, provoking changes as well as reflecting them. Even if one takes place as a determinate configuration of space in time, and thus fixed, this is momentary. The configuration of such a place can be changed. And if one considers the identity of a place, this cannot be taken as fixed, either, since, as Massey has affirmed, no place holds a coherent, seamless identity, since a place does not mean the same for every one.<sup>3</sup>

As Foucault has suggested, the ideologies and strategies of space are so varied that they trigger a whole geopolitics, which is made up of “tactics and strategies deployed through implantations, distributions, demarcations, control of territories and organisations of domains” (1988: 77), and whose analysis will help “to capture the

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<sup>3</sup> For Doreen Massey's discussion on the impossibility to equate a place with a fixed and agreed identity see Massey 1998: 151- 155.

process by which knowledge functions as a form of power and disseminates the effects of power” (1988: 69). That is, an analysis of space would enable to detect the ideology and form of power that are in space. Lefèbvre has pointed out the close link between ideology and space:

What is an ideology without a space to which it refers, a space which it describes, whose vocabulary and links it makes use of, and whose code it embodies? [...] More generally speaking, what we call ideology only achieves consistency by intervening in social space and its production, and by thus taking on body therein. Ideology *per se* might well be said to consist primarily in a discourse upon social space. (1991: 44)

Thus, space and place are both agent and product of social relations, as well as immediacy and mediation, where power and ideology are exercised. Moreover, concerning the interplay between power and ideology, or power and knowledge, as Foucault would put it, Lefèbvre coins two very interesting terms that will later help to understand the dramatic possibilities of geopathology: domination and appropriation. Dominated space is “a space transformed – by technology, by practice” (1991: 164), “the realization of a master’s project [... which] is usually closed, sterilized, emptied out” (1991: 165). Appropriated space “may be said of a natural space modified in order to serve the needs and possibilities of a group that it has been appropriated by that group. [...] An appropriated space *resembles* a work of art” (1991: 165, author’s emphasis), for instance, houses speak the lives of those who build and inhabit them. Lefèbvre continues, “the outside space of the community is dominated, while the indoor space of family life is appropriated” (1991: 166).<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the many divisions and hierarchies inherent to appropriated spaces will reveal, as will be expanded on later, that in indoor spaces dominated and appropriated spaces also coexist.

Lefèbvre himself has briefly pointed out how interesting the analysis of space in theatre is. In theatre there is interplay between fictitious and real spaces and places that all together give birth to the “third space” of theatre (1991: 188). But if univocal definitions of space and place have been difficult to reach in the general terms of philosophy, geography or politics, their definitions in terms of theatre are not an easy matter, either. Indeed, the concept of space in theatre is used in several domains:

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<sup>4</sup> In Lefèbvre’s definition of dominated and appropriated spaces, it can be seen that he refers to space while other critics would prefer saying place instead.

*Space* is already an overdetermined word: [regarding theatre alone it is used] to describe a play's setting, a theatre venue, scenography, the socio-cultural milieu beyond a theatre building, which nevertheless intersects with theatrical action, and is an elemental aspect of theatre itself. (Tompkins 2003: 538, author's emphasis)

It seems that the writings of Anne Ubersfeld (1977, 1981)<sup>5</sup> are a compulsory starting point for a study of the functions of space in theatre and to start clarifying spatial terms in this field. Ubersfeld insists on the centrality of space in theatrical communication and she makes a preliminary distinction between theatre space (*lieu théâtral*) and theatrical space (*espace théâtral*). Theatrical space is a general notion to refer to the whole complex function of space in the theatre, an abstraction of theatre space, which is the place of performance, the theatre building. Ubersfeld's distinction between these two terms has consequently been of great use in performance studies, for her emphasis on theatre space as the starting ground for the meaning created onstage and perceived by the audience and, according to McAuley, for "her perception of the way the space of performance mediates the playtext and the socio-political, sociocultural, context of both text and performance" (2000: 18).

Beyond this first distinction between theatre space and theatrical space, Ubersfeld goes on to analyse what she calls dramatic space. As Ubersfeld claims, any semiotician's or playwright's task is to find or create in the playtext those spatial elements that will mediate between the dramatic text and its perception.<sup>6</sup> The fictional place created in the text gives way to a scenic place. These two places together form the dramatic space, which, quoting McAuley, "is made up of both textual and performance signs; it is accessible to the reader of the playtext and, differently manifested, to the spectator experiencing the space as constructed by the given production" (2000: 19). As McAuley says, "Dramatic space is more than fictional space, even in the expanded sociological sense that [Ubersfeld] gives to the scenic place, for it involves the dramatic geography of the action as a whole and is indeed a means of conceptualising the whole action or narrative content of the play" (2000: 19).

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<sup>5</sup> The works I refer to here are Ubersfeld, Anne. 1977. *Lire le théâtre*. Paris: Éditions Sociales; and 1981. *L'école du spectateur. Lire le théâtre II*. Paris: Éditions Sociales. For the present thesis, I have employed the Spanish versions of these works: 1989. *Semiótica teatral*. Trans. Francisco Torres Monreal. Madrid: Cátedra/Universidad de Murcia; and 1997. *La escuela del espectador*. Trans. Silvia Ramos. Madrid: Publicaciones de la Asociación de Directores de Espectáculos.

<sup>6</sup> See Ubersfeld 1989: 118.

At this point one of the main controversies regarding the value of the dramatic text in theatrical studies arises. Accounting for the division between dramatic studies and theatrical studies prevailing in Anglophone scholarship, semioticians have always endeavoured to appreciate the value of the dramatic text as a proper tool to analyse the theatrical experience.<sup>7</sup> Even performance scholars cannot deny that “A great deal of information about spatial function is contained in the written playtext, and such texts can undoubtedly be a source of valuable information about performance practice, especially when read in conjunction with architectural and iconographic records by appropriately trained and skilled readers” (McAuley 2000: 9). In this concern, Jacques Copeau argues the value of the dramatic text for its theatrical production in the following terms,

The born theatre practitioner, by some mysterious complicity, takes possession almost without effort of the work of the born playwright. In what is for the outsider just a series of words, black on white, the disjointed phrases of the dialogue, he discovers almost at first glance a world of shapes, sounds, colour and movement. He does not invent these things. He discovers them. They are the movements, colours, sounds and shapes that were more or less present in the mind of the poet as he wrote. That is why I think that for a work that has been genuinely conceived for the stage there is a single, necessary *mise en scène*, the one inscribed onto the text by the author, like the notes on a musical score. These notes do not speak to the eyes of the profane, but the musician’s gaze makes them sing. (qtd. in McAuley 2000: 216)

Though performance scholars would easily counter-argue Copeau’s statement by saying that every performance is different not only from each other but also from the playtext, the truth is that, not only for the born practitioner, but for the born reader, the text will reveal the author’s theatricality. Moreover, paraphrasing Bobes’s argumentation, when a playwright writes a dramatic text s/he usually bears in mind the potential places where the play can be produced, and accordingly s/he imagines dramatic spaces and places and characters that move in a determined way in that space the author invents. And all this is identifiable once the reader dives into the text and the author’s context.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, phenomenology scholars highlight that the actor’s appearance onstage, with his gestures and movements across the stage, grants space with its whole meaning, that “it is the

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<sup>7</sup> See for instance Bobes Naves 1997: 8 for a brief account of the opposed views arising from the division between text and representation in semiotic studies.

<sup>8</sup> See Bobes Naves 2001: 445- 446.

presence of the actor that makes the space meaningful,” says McAuley, (2000: 90). It cannot be forgotten, however, that that same actor’s appearance and kinesic relation to the stage is usually dictated beforehand by the playtext.

The main problems semioticians face when trying to do research on spatial references in a dramatic text is that these are sometimes covert. While playwrights such as Strindberg crowd their plays with extensive stage directions, carefully describing the configuration of the stage space, others, such as Chekhov or Beckett, offer very scarce stage directions. As McAuley says regarding spatial imagery and spatial metaphors, “dramatic texts are particularly interesting in this regard, although the indications of spatiality might not occur where one would almost expect them” (2000: 218). Stage directions are the most obvious device for information concerning space and how it may function in the creation of meaning in performance, “but this kind of information is not restricted to the *didascalia* and secondary text. Even a text with minimal stage directions contains a great deal of spatial information in the dialogue and in the basic organization of plot and dramatic action” (McAuley 2000: 222).

In *Lire le théâtre* (1977), Anne Ubersfeld claims that the dramatic text provides a spatial matrix, which is constituted by every linguistic spatial reference in the text. Ubersfeld proposes a method of textual analysis which includes not only all textual references to place and space, but also verbs of movement, adverbial phrases related to space and the occupation of space, all mentions of objects that could potentially be present onstage, and all prepositional phrases. Thus, it could be said that there are two different but connected sets in Ubersfeld’s semiotic method to analyse the underlying system of space in a play. On the one hand, and by reading the text, one should be able to draw in their mind the exact configuration of the stage space as conceived by the author. Firstly, walls, floor, windows and doors must be taken into account. The material boundaries created through these basic elements are important for the dramatic development of the play, since windows and doors connect the onstage space with the offstage, and it can thus be used to link the localized onstage fictional place with the localized offstage place. Then, every piece of furniture and stage property must be located. Chairs and tables, books, lamps and ashtrays will help to further define the spatiality of the play, either by giving information about the milieu, about the character’s identity, or by the use that characters will make of them. As McAuley says,

“The object, being physically present in the space, necessarily serves to shape and define that space and, equally necessarily, has an impact upon the human users of space” (2000: 173). The second set of elements to be taken into account for a proper semiotic analysis of spatiality relates to characters. The physical appearance of a character is important spatially. From costume to hair colour, the outward appearance of the character helps configure and gives information about the place that a character is in. Equally important for a sound semiotic analysis of space is the way the character occupies the fictional place. In this concern, McAuley believes that

Vitally important [...] is everything to do with the performers’ occupation of the space, their entrances, exits, other movements and gestures, and the proxemic relationship that these moves and gestures set up between actors, spectators, objects, and the space itself. These movements and groupings become meaningful only when situated in the given space, and they are the major means whereby the space is activated and itself made meaningful. (2000: 8)

I agree with McAuley’s statement above, but as argued before regarding the relevance of the playtext for the configuration of theatrical space, I would also highlight here the importance of the character’s occupation of the space in the playtext, not only the performer’s in a production. As discussed earlier, information about a character’s occupation of the stage space is usually detailed in the dramatic text.

The nomenclature to deal with a character’s occupation of space is complex and extensively detailed. Keir Elam defines kinesics as “the movement of the body” in the fictional dramatic place (2001: 69). Erika Fischer Lichte divides kinesics into mimics, gestures and proxemics.<sup>9</sup> Mimics details the movements characters make with their faces. McAuley believes that while facial expression “is a visual signifier and is a very powerful part of the actor’s bodily expressivity. It is, however, not dependent upon the spatial reality of the theatre” (2000: 114). McAuley seems to contradict himself when

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<sup>9</sup> See Fischer Lichte 1999: 38, 68. Erika Fischer Lichte’s systematic method to analyse movement seems more practical than other methods provided by other scholars. For instance, as seen in the quotation above McAuley does not consider entrances and exits as proxemic relations, and the term kinesics does not appear in his discourse. Keir Elam’s model complicates the analysis of movement enormously by using the general category “proxemic relations,” which includes fixed-features (the static architectural configurations), semi-fixed-features (movable but non-dynamic objects, such as the set, lighting, and the stage and auditorium arrangements) and the informal space (relations of proximity and distance between individuals: actor-actor, actor-spectator, and spectator-spectator interplays) (2001: 62- 69). Elam includes kinesic components within his informal space, and which randomly includes movements, gestures, facial expression and postures (2001: 69- 78).

later he says that looks, as if they were a separate category from facial expression, play a vital role in this regard:

in the theatre a look is very much a spatial act. The person or thing looked at is present in the space together with the person looking, and a look always functions in some way to make a connection between them; it directs the spectator's [and the reader's] attention within the space and is one of the performer's [character's] most powerful stratagems in activating the whole space. (2000: 114)

I believe that facial expressions, as well as looks, are important spatial acts. It is not only that as long as a character moves in a determinate place everything s/he does is spatial, but also that the author describes the character smiling or blinking *in* that fictional place and *related to* that very place.

Gestures are the movements a character makes without changing her/his location, that is, everything related to the character's body movement without changing her/his localisation. Theatre theorists such as Antonine Artaud and Bertolt Brecht have pointed out the vital role of gestures in theatre. In *The Theatre and its Double* (1958), Artaud proposes a theatre devoid of what he considers the tyranny of verbal discourse, a theatre that, among other aspects, is heavily charged with the power of gestures. With the different goal in his epic theatre, Brecht's theatre also highlights the role of the *Gestus*.<sup>10</sup> It is through the *Gestus* that the social attitudes encoded in the playtext become visible to the spectator. One of the main features of gesture in drama is that it is deictic, referential to the place the gesture is performed. Patrice Pavis observes,

The essential modality (and at the same time function) of the gesture is its capacity to sketch out the situation-of-utterance, to become deictic, a sign which indicates the presence of the stage and of the actor ... Just as the gesture cannot be disassociated from the actor who produces it, it is always geared to the stage through innumerable corporal deixes, beginning with attitude, glance, or simple physical presence. (qtd. in Elam 2001: 72- 73)

As Elam says, gesture "constitutes the essential mode of *ostending* body, stage and onstage action in (actual) space" (2001: 73, author's emphasis).

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<sup>10</sup> Though I acknowledge that Bertolt Brecht's *Gestus* involves much more than gestures, this theatre theoretician and practitioner obviously counts on the power of gestures in themselves for his epic theatre.

The final integrating element for an analysis of kinesics is proxemics, which is the character's movements across space. As has been said, the meanings of this kind of movement vary enormously: "Movement may be meaningful in itself, or it may function rather to construct meaningful spatial groupings (either between performers or between performer and object or element of the set), and these, in turn, may convey ideas about character and fictional situation" (McAuley 2000: 105). That is, the very act of moving from one end of the stage to the other has a meaning in the dramatic development of the play, even more, if this movement means appearing on or disappearing from the stage.

Then, there is also a meaning in the whole range of possible proxemic relations that can be established between characters, characters and props or pieces of furniture, and character and speech as well, since "These modes of bodily action all function in relation to speech, for in the theatre speech becomes a spatial function: whatever is said in the theatre is necessarily positioned in some way in relation to the performance space, and the position becomes part of the meaning conveyed" (McAuley 2000: 95). As McAuley points out, a different position or movement may grant the words uttered with a different meaning:

In traditional Western theatre meaning typically emerges from the interaction of words and movement in a given space. Diction, intonation, and other paralinguistic features of the actors' delivery are obviously important factors in inflecting the meaning conveyed, but even more important is the spatial organization of the action for this can give specific meaning to the words spoken. With a different spatial organization the same words can be endowed with radically different meanings. (2000: 107)

Besides material boundaries, stage properties, pieces of furniture, and characters as integrating elements within the configuration of the stage space, Erika Fischer Lichte theorises that the use of lighting and music must also be taken into account for an analysis of spatiality onstage.<sup>11</sup> The spatial uses of lighting are multiple and work by combining four lighting properties: "intensity, colour, distribution and movement" (Elam 2001: 84). Elam summarises these uses as "selective visibility," "revelation of

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<sup>11</sup> For a detailed discussion on the importance of lighting and music in the semiotic analysis of stage spaces see Fischer Lichte 1999: 231- 247.



form,” “composition” and expression of “mood”<sup>12</sup> (2001: 84). Regarding music, Fischer Lichte points out that noise and music as theatre signs are not only used in their relation to characters and their activities, but that they are also signs of the fictional place that a character is placed in. For instance, if a character sings, the song is not only revealing about the character’s attitude (happy, sad, moody, etc.), but that very song may also refer to space, to movement, to objects in the fictional place or things that are happening onstage.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the centrality of the stage space in the theatrical experience, scholars do not share a precise vocabulary to deal with it. As McAuley acknowledges,

There is no term for the fictional place, nor are there terms that will enable us to distinguish neatly between the fictional spaces represented onstage, those that are evoked through the offstage connection to the onstage and those that are referred to in the dialogue and which form part of the dramatic geography of the play. (2000: 17)

Interestingly, in his book *Space in Performance. Making Meaning in the Theatre* (1999), McAuley offers a taxonomy that will enable scholars to explore the multiple functions of this spatial reality in the construction and communication of theatrical meaning. Using theoretical frameworks and a method deriving from semiotics, phenomenology, sociology and ethnography, McAuley comes up with the following taxonomy of spatial functions in theatre, which I find extremely useful for the present thesis:

I. The Social Reality

Theatre Space

Audience Space

Performance Space

Practitioner Space

Rehearsal Space

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<sup>12</sup> Elam acknowledges that lighting functions and properties as appear in his *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* are borrowed from the lighting designer Richard Pilbrow and from Adolph Appia (2001: 84).

<sup>13</sup> See Fischer Lichte 1999: 231- 232.

- II. The Physical/Fictional Relationship
  - Stage Space
  - Presentational Space
  - Fictional Place
  
- III. Location and Fiction
  - Onstage Fictional Place
  - Offstage Fictional Place
    - Unlocalized in relation to Performance Space
    - Localized in relation to Performance Space
      - Contiguous/Remote Spectrum
      - Audience Off
  
- IV. Textual Space
- V. Thematic Space

(2000: 25)

Beginning with the fifth category, and though listed separately, thematic space brings together all the spatial signs and all the spatial functions from the other categories that will be explained next. As McAuley believes, “meaning merges only when all these functions are seen structurally as parts of a whole” (2000: 33). McAuley suggests that theatre and performance spaces, two subcategories of the first category in his taxonomy, are preconditions to the theatrical experience, and that as such they will help to organise the stage space for a definite performance. That is to say, the exact configuration of the stage space that the audience will see is the complex product of the multiple interrelations between “text, performance space, the bodily space of the actors, and even features of the rehearsal space” (McAuley 2000: 27). In the second group McAuley includes the basic terms to analyse space in theatre. These are: stage space, which is “the physical space of the stage;” presentational space, which is “the physical use made of this space in any given performance;” and fictional place, which “refers to the place or places presented, represented or evoked onstage and off” (2000: 29).

McAuley’s third category, Location and Fiction, is so complex and fundamental for both theatre and drama, and it has evolved so much throughout the centuries, as seen

in the previous chapter, that McAuley grants it a whole category to account for all its subdivisions. The onstage fictional place is the recognisable place represented on the stage space. I also agree with McAuley on the importance that offstage fictional places deserve in the construction of theatrical meaning. What happens offstage is many times as important as or even more important for the theatrical experience than what happens before the eyes of the spectators. As McAuley affirms, “the way the space is conceived and organized, the kinds of space that are shown and/or evoked, the values and events associated with them, and the relationship between them are always of fundamental importance in the meaning conveyed” (2000: 32). Hence the necessity to include subcategories within the offstage fictional place. The localized offstage fictional places “are those places that are contiguous with those onstage, immediately accessed through a door or stairway or partially glimpsed through a window,” and the unlocalized offstage fictional place “includes those places that are part of the dramatic geography of the action but which are not placed physically in relation to the onstage, the contiguous offstage, or to the audience space” (McAuley 2000: 31). Other scholars, such as Manuel Sito Alba and M<sup>a</sup> Carmen Bobes Naves, have also highlighted the relevance of the places evoked throughout the scenic development of a play.<sup>14</sup> Sito Alba has pointed out that to analyse the functionality of these “evoked places” (*lugares aludidos*) special attention must be paid to locate these places from a bigger extension to a smaller one: “country, area, exterior (countryside, wood, sea, path), interior (city, street, kind of housing, room, etc.)” (1987: 137, my translation).<sup>15</sup> A close analysis of these evoked places will reveal their iconic value and functionality regarding the onstage fictional place and the very dramatic development of the play. Turning now to McAuley’s fourth category, the textual space, this refers to the wealth of spatial references that the playtext itself contains, and which can be analysed by the semiotic means discussed earlier.

As seen above, there are different categories to be taken into account in a study of spatial functionality in theatre. It could be said that the different emphases placed on

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<sup>14</sup> See Sito Alba 1987: 136- 137, and Bobes Naves 2001: 131.

<sup>15</sup> “En primer término han de considerarse los lugares que *aparecen* en la obra: los que el escenario representa ante el público e intenta proyectar en sus mentes, y como complemento de ellos los *aludidos* a lo largo del transcurso escénico. Al analizarlos, para ver claramente su funcionalidad, se ha de procurar, dentro de lo posible, fijar la situación de mayor a menor: país, región, exterior (campo, bosque, mar, camino), interior (ciudad, calle, tipo de vivienda, habitación, etc.)” (Sito Alba 1987: 136- 137).

each of McAuley's categories listed above have paved the way for three theatrical approaches that currently focus on geography in theatre. Michael McKinnie has summarised them as follows,

While space is an increasingly popular issue in theatre research, theatre studies employ various conceptions of the geography of performance. One strand of thought, best exemplified by Una Chaudhuri's *Staging Place: The Geography of Modern Drama*, considers space and place (which constitutes particular bounded spaces in time) as themes of dramatic literature, or as dramaturgical principles that govern the construction of dramatic narratives. Another strand, which runs through the work of Richard Schechner, treats space as a phenomenological concern, where the co-presence of performer and audience in a particular place frames the making of meaning. A third strand, illustrated by Marvin Carlson's *Places of Performance: The Semiotics of Theatre Architecture*, employs a historicised semiotic analysis to chart how spatial codes are, or were, inscribed in the production and reception of a theatre event. Common to all these strands is a hierarchical conception of the relationship between space and performance; theatre studies have been concerned primarily with the ways in which the contours of a place can be assimilated within the theatrical text or event. (2003: 580- 581)

It could be said that the two latter approaches focus on the physical configuration of the space of the theatre auditorium and the impact of such configuration on the relationship established between performers and audience. The very architectural, and economical, skeleton of the site of performance, as well as the location of such a site, which connotes a determinate socio-economical and cultural status of the audience, are key factors for the perception and reception of a theatrical event. As Joanne Tompkins believes, "the geographical location of the venue anchors theatre practice in social, cultural, and historical contexts" (2003: 537). That is, theatrical streams as the ones proposed by Schechner and Carlson tend to focus deeper on the two first categories McAuley provides, i.e. Social Reality and the Physical/Fictional Relationship. The present thesis, however, is born to Una Chaudhuri's consideration of space and place as themes and principles in dramatic narratives, which mainly relies on McAuley's third category, Location and Fiction.

Before entering into an analysis of Una Chaudhuri's work, it seems necessary to take into account what can be considered the broader category that would include Chaudhuri's work, and this is "Landscape theatre." Landscape theatre theorists share the belief that landscape is culturally used "to define subjectivity and confer identity"

(Chaudhuri 2002: 23). They would agree with cultural geographer Peirce Lewis's standpoint that

Our human landscape is our unwitting autobiography, reflecting our tastes, our values, our aspirations, and even our fears, in tangible, visible form. We rarely think of landscape that way, and so the cultural record we have 'written' in the landscape is liable to be more truthful than most autobiographies because we are less self-conscious about how we describe ourselves. (1979: 12)

According to Chaudhuri, independently from the fact whether landscape consciously or unconsciously tells our lives, the interplay between culture and landscape is always a "culturscape," since landscape "is never free of cultural coding" (2002: 12). Following this scholar, "The ideological use of the landscape is perhaps nowhere more readily apparent than in America, where landscape painting played a decisive role in establishing a link (which persists to this day) between national identity and the land itself" (2002: 24). It could be said that many contemporary American scholars share the concerns that there is a "close relationship between psyche and landscape, even to the extent of viewing the latter as a creation or projection of the former" (Carlson 2002: 157), and that "Every dramatic world is conditioned by a landscape imaginary, a 'deep' surround suggested to the mind that extends far beyond the onstage environment reflected in the dramatic text and its scenographic representation" (Fuchs 2002: 30). Accounting for these beliefs, Chaudhuri and Fuchs find the term landscape very appropriate to label this kind of playwriting, a term that "names the modern theater's new spatial paradigm" (2002: 2):

Landscape is more grounded and available to visual experience than space, but more environmental and constitutive of the imaginative order than place. It is *inside* space, one might say, but *contains* place. *Landscape* has particular value as a mediating term between space and place. It can therefore more fully represent the complex spatial mediations within modern theatrical form, and between modern theater and the world. (Chaudhuri and Fuchs 2002: 3, authors' emphasis)

As the term landscape comes to represent the diverse connections between land and human adaptations to and of it, "Landscape theater seeks to reanimate the life-art dialectic that realism has enclosed within its illusory four walls. In doing so, it seems to

retrace the trajectory followed by the concept of landscape itself, from the two-dimensional representation to the three-dimensional environment one can explore and inhabit” (Chaudhuri 2002: 21). Departing from “the shielded and sheltered theatrology inaugurated by perspective staging and perfected by naturalism,” landscape theatre comes to read landscapes as texts, and as such, the main principle is “that landscapes, like texts, are not singular or stable signifying systems, and further, that a single text is susceptible to many different readings” (2002: 14). Consequently, landscape theatre requires semiotic and deconstruction methodologies that would enable the interpreter to decode the conventions and specific messages that landscapes communicate.

Landscape theatre scholars’ interests are placed in very different aspects of the theatrical experience. Studies carried out by these critics range from analysing the *langscapes*<sup>16</sup> in Gertrude Stein’s plays (Bowers 2002) and in more contemporary playwrights, such as Maria Irene Fornes or Suzan-Lori Parks (Carlson 2002), coming through more traditional analysis of plays taking into account mythology and site and their relation to plays, what could be seen as spatially vernacular playwriting (Schmitt 2002), to what is known as environmental theatre, which shows how landscape is created and conferred with meaning by placing the audience in that very landscape (Garner 2002).

*Staging Place: The Geography of Modern Drama*, first published in 1995, constitutes a very original approach to the conceptualisation of space in theatre studies. Chaudhuri reunites the meaning and role of place both in the social and theatrical experience. For her, as for many theatre semioticians,<sup>17</sup> space is not the mere background against which characters act, but “the essential element of all theatrical representation” (2000: xi). She starts from her belief that dramatic structure is a reflection of the “mutually constructive relations between people and space. Who one is and who one can be [...], a function of *where* one is and how one experiences that place” (2000: xii, author’s emphasis). Consequently, the configuration of the stage space, the set, with all the elements which constitute it, is “as much a part of the

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<sup>16</sup> The term *langscape* is a deviation from landscape, since the point is that playwrights such as Gertrude Stein do not only show landscape as discourse, but they emphasise the very way this discourse is created through verbal means. For more information see Bowers 2002: 121-144.

<sup>17</sup> See for instance Sito Alba 1987, Esslin 1988, Ubersfeld 1989, and Elam 2001.

contemporary theatre as such standard elements as character, plot, and dialogue” (Wilcox 2003: 542- 543). I agree with Chaudhuri’s belief in the significant power of the elements of the stage space. According to this scholar,

The profusion of objects that clutter the realist stage [...they] are, for want of a better word, *characters* in the play. Their significance is not confined to the short circuitry of symbolism; rather they exercise a direct, unmetaphorical power in the formulation of the dramatic action. (Chaudhuri 2000: 80, author’s emphasis)

Una Chaudhuri’s interest in the analysis of the theatrical representation of space in its relation to dramatic development leads her to coin a very interesting term, borrowed from medical studies, for drama analysis: *geopathology*. This term stands for the configuration of a stage space where place becomes a problem for characters. In the dramatic discourse of geopathology Chaudhuri identifies two principles. Firstly, the *victimage of location*. This principle describes place as the protagonists’ fundamental problem. This spatial problem leads the characters to acknowledge their need for the second principle Chaudhuri identifies in geopathic drama: the *heroism of departure*. According to this principle a character gains full independence and fulfils the creation of his/her own identity by a means of disentangling himself/herself from the oppressive place s/he was fixed to.<sup>18</sup> According to Chaudhuri’s definition of geopathology in drama, it could be said that a *geopathic character* is that which displays an utter and painful disgust for the place s/he inhabits. In like manner, this dramatic place gathers several conditions, both physical and figurative, which will be analysed later, that makes this place merit the label of *geopathic set*. A geopathic character finds the fictional place where the play takes place a constraining space from which her/his escape is hardly possible.

As Chaudhuri has pointed out after analysing several modern American dramas, home is “the core concept of traditional geopathology” (2000: 174). Indeed, theatrical representations of home constitute a great tradition in American theatre. Brenda Murphy has analysed how American realist drama conjoined setting and character identity

During the twenties, many realistic plays depicted the familial or social problems arising from the neurotic state of a single individual, most often the managing matron, castrating wife, and

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<sup>18</sup> See Chaudhuri 2000: xii.

dominant mother, a character that lent herself perfectly to the notion of setting as an extension of characterization. The use of interior setting for characterization, of course, goes back as far as Mitchell's *New York Idea* (1906). It had developed into the comic convention of reflecting a character's personal humor in his, or usually her, motion of interior decorating. (1987: 151)

Murphy continues, "The writers of psychological plays sought a more indexical effect, using the setting to focus the audience's attention on specific qualities in the character" (1987: 151). Whether for comic or serious purposes, many of the Provincetown Players' early plays are located in interior settings that help to understand the characters inhabiting those rooms.<sup>19</sup> For instance, in *Contemporaries* (1915) Wilbur Daniel Steel puts his poor characters in a dark underground room in a congested quarter to make his social denunciation that the poor are in a kind of symbolic hell. In Pendleton King's *Cocaine* (1916- 1917), the attic apartment where the drug addicts Joe and Nora live is as messy as their lives. Moreover, it will be the fear of being evicted from this unhomely place what will trigger the tragic development of the play as they attempt suicide. Rita Wellman's *Funiculi Funicula* (1917- 1918) is set in a small Washington Square apartment, which is packed with books and modernist paintings and smells of tobacco to clearly suggest the bohemian life style of Alma and Taddema. In Edna Ferber's *The Eldest* (1919- 1920), the disordered dining room in the cheap area where the action takes place reveals Rose's entrapment in her roles and the house. The more she cleans and tides everything up, the more her siblings spoil her work and keep her tied at home. Eugene O'Neill's *Diff'rent* (1920) also exemplifies how the home setting can be used with the purpose Murphy explains. In the following description, the interior setting mirrors the heroine's regression to psychological and sexual adolescence in the youthful redecoration of her living room:

The room has a grotesque aspect of old age turned flighty and masquerading as the most empty-headed youth. Orange curtains are at the windows. The carpet has given way to a varnished hardwood floor, its glassy surface set off by three small, garish-coloured rugs, placed with precision in front of the two doors and under the table. The wall paper is now a cream colour sprayed with pink flowers [...] A gramophone is where the old mahogany chest had been. A brand new piano shines splendidly in the far right corner by the door, and a bookcase with glass doors that pull up and slide in, flanks at the fireplace. (1922: 241)

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<sup>19</sup> At this point, it seems appropriate to remind the role of the Provincetown Players within the development of American modern theatre, seen in Chapter 1, and that Susan Glaspell's dramatic work developed mainly during her participation in this little theatre group.



Nevertheless, this use of the domestic setting to show a character's identity is only a minimal part of the function of this kind of setting in geopathic drama, where also a character's identity is utterly affected by the set, and not solely the other way around. As Bert States says, "rooms, like all [theatre] images, must eventually justify their presence, they must inhabit the people who inhabit them" (1985: 46).

Ironically, American materialism triggers an endless search to build a house one can call home, but then this house may evoke a deadly sense of fixity that could lead to pathology. "Progress, the idea of moving on – is an idea we are committed to as Americans. Yet we are also trying ever again to hold on, to sink, roots, to build homes", says Pfefferkorn (1991: 120). As early as 1845, Margaret Fuller, who influenced enormously the feminist movement in the United States with her *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, already emphasised the parallel importance of home and expansion. She says: "A house is no home unless it contain [sic] food and fire for the mind as well as for the body," and "human beings are not so constituted that they can live without expansion. If they do not get it one way, they must another, or perish" (1999: 15). In Fuller's discourse, the physical construction of a house only achieves the status of home once this house provides its inhabitants with both material and intellectual possibilities. To be a home, a house must not only provide physical security, but it should also assure that its dwellers can develop their inner selves. A home is the container of both the physical and psychological selves of its inhabitants. Fuller also points out humans' inherent necessity to expand. This must as well be understood both in physical and intellectual terms. As in the case of a house, humans need to transcend, if not physically, moving out of the house, at least intellectually, thus the importance of the "food and fire for the mind" Fuller highlights. As this early feminist says, the accomplishment of this expansion is so vital, that if it is not achieved, one perishes. In the dramatic discourse of geopathology, the action focuses on the moments previous to this fatal fate, on the moments when the house limits characters' expansion.

Linda Ben-Zvi has suggested that many of Eugene O'Neill's plays are based upon this irony, upon this clash between "an espoused escape or freedom and a desired return to fixity" (1989a: 222). O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey Into Night* (1940) clearly exemplifies this point. After decades travelling around because of James Tyrone's acting career, the family eventually has a place to call home. But this house suffocates

every member of the family, turning them into victims of the place they inhabit. In this play “every character and every relationship is defined by a problem with place” (Chaudhuri 2000: 56). James is defeated in his patriarchal enterprise to create a home for his family. His sons hate the house but are economically unable to move out, and Mary, after returning from an asylum, finds this house a prison, instead of a peaceful haven in which to recover from her addictions. As her son Edmund reproaches James Tyrone: “you’ve dragged her around on the road, season after season, on one night stands, with no one she could talk to, waiting night after night in dirty hotel rooms for you to come back with a bun on after the bars closed! Christ, is it any wonder she didn’t want to be cured!” (1956: 141). For Mary, there is no difference between the dirty hotel rooms where she had to await her husband and their house. Both are locations where she has been placed, no matter what she wanted. Typically, Arthur Miller’s family dramas also start by configuring a theatrical representation of home as a place that traps his characters, as can be perceived in *Death of a Salesman* (1948).

The vast majority of Susan Glaspell’s plays are also set in houses that can rarely be called peaceful havens. While Sarlós has pointed out that the realistic settings of the early plays of the Provincetown Players are due to the group’s financial shortcomings, settings which “did little to visually stimulate spectators” (1982: 162), this thesis will prove that Glaspell’s preference for domestic interior settings is a deeply thought decision that she kept also when the Provincetown Players had more economic resources. Indeed, her apparently realistic home sets “exemplify the various routes that modernism took in theatre” (Ozieblo 2006b: 7). I agree with Ozieblo’s observation that in her plays, and thus through her sets, Glaspell seeks beauty and “otherness,” in the same sense that Edward Gordon Craig advocated, at the same time that “she held a Shavian conviction that the theatre could do more than offer an aesthetic experience and, having established an intellectual relationship with her audience, sought to reform society through her plays” (Ozieblo 2006b: 7). Glaspell employed her home settings as stimulating starting points to make the audience think by themselves. So as a follower of the new ideas of Craig and Appia, and though Glaspell’s experimentation with light and music might be defined as uneven, she adheres to these practitioners’ defence that “suggestion, evocation, symbolical representation, were far better than a slavish reproduction of reality”. And as Shaw, Glaspell also asks the audience for “respect,

interest, affection for human nature” as represented in her characters and fictional onstage places.<sup>20</sup>

The central role that home settings have in the development of Susan Glaspell’s plays responds to her own preoccupation with the idea of home in her life. As Linda Ben-Zvi claims,

To have a home of her own was immensely important to Susan. In several of her plays, married women live in houses that they alone own. It is their space, which they often struggle to control against those who attempt to invade their territory, even their husbands. In one unpublished fragment entitled ‘On Home,’ Susan writes, ‘Home – more than a house. Home of the spirit. Home is what we want to be. Where we feel at ease with ourselves. Home is faith – purpose. Many are homeless. Must get back home.’ (2005: 146)

In Susan Glaspell’s idea of home one can identify one of the dramatic principles behind the figure of home in drama: “the humanist yearning for a stable container for identity – a home for the self, a room of one’s own” (Chaudhuri 2000: 59). Probably, Glaspell would agree with her friend Mary Heaton Vorse’s idea of home:

A woman may not be different to her house. It is part of her and serves her – or it is her enemy. Your house can destroy you; the very way the doors swing may kill your peace of mind. A house must give you the blessing of peace and privacy. Your room must be a sanctuary against the world. Many a woman has gone stale, has had her family turn upon her the faces of enemies, because her room gave her no defense against them. (1991: 32)

As Ben-Zvi has acknowledged, “Susan also liked the idea of ordering and protecting her space. Even in a temporary home on Delphi, in the 1920s, she experienced ‘that sense of a household which one keeps safe, that it may move on its destined way,’ calling such a feeling ‘more than other satisfactions’” (2005: 146). But interestingly, Glaspell’s dramatic homes are not the protected and ordered places she dreamt of, but the physical media to show what Chaudhuri calls “the desire to deterritorialize the self” (2000: 59), the media to put onstage “the tropes of belonging and exile” (2000: 27), and the places where, as Heaton Vorse stated, family “turn[s] upon the faces of enemies.”

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<sup>20</sup> Craig, Appia and Shaw have been briefly discussed in Chapter 1, see pp. 4, 6- 8.

Taking into account the present difficulty in getting some of Glaspell's plays, I would like to offer a brief summary of the plays; a summary that will help to follow the discussions of the present thesis, highlighting the relationship between characters and their homes, the fictional places Glaspell puts her characters in. *Suppressed Desires* takes place in New York, in a modern apartment in the Village. The protagonists, Steve and Henrietta, are accordingly modern New Yorkers. The conflict starts when Henrietta, a follower of psychoanalysis, drives her sister and husband to be "psyched." When Steve is told that he has to leave Henrietta, and Mabel that she has to be Steve's wife, Henrietta rejects psychoanalysis. *Trifles* is set in an isolated Midwest farm where a murder has taken place. Apparently, Mr. Wright has been strangled by his wife Minnie, so the action starts when the Sheriff, the County Attorney and a farmer, Mr. Hale, come to the farm to gather evidence against Mrs. Wright. While the men do their job, Mrs. Peters, the Sheriff's wife, and Mrs. Hale stay in the kitchen, reconstructing, from what they see around them, the pitiful life of Mrs. Wright. Eventually they conclude that Mrs. Wright had powerful reasons to kill her husband, and they erase the evidence they find and as they think it could be used against Minnie in the trial.

Glaspell also sets *Close the Book* in the Midwest, this time in the house of the well-positioned Root family. The dramatic conflict starts when Jhansi, the protagonist, who rejoices in her role of outsider as she thinks herself the daughter of gypsies, paradoxically engages to Peyton Root. During the engagement meeting, Glaspell portrays how Jhansi cannot stand the physicality of the traditional and well-established house she is in, claiming that she prefers being outside and a social outcast. A book of genealogy will serve to dismantle Jhansi's wish, showing how easy it is to be inside and outside society. The book discovers that she is the member of a respectful family, and thus she is supposed to behave properly. However, the book will also disclose secrets about the Roots, secrets that would make their position tremble, so the play ends with the command to "Close the book!"

*The Outside* is wonderfully constructed upon an old life-saving station on Cape Cod, a set that resembles the derelict state of the female protagonists, Mrs. Patrick and Allie Mayo. The play is a marvellous debate on the powers of life and death, symbolically represented on the same kind of struggle enacted in the sea seen offstage, and the fight between sand and bushes to be one on top of the other. Throughout the

play, Glaspell guides us through different readings of the set, concluding in the final salvation of both women, ready to embrace life.

Glaspell chose New England as the location for *Bernice*. This time the set represents an isolated house in the woods, representative of the absent protagonist, Bernice. After her death, the other characters have to cope with Bernice's physical absence, but symbolic presence in the house. The play develops as the characters have to adjust the idea they had of Bernice's identity and the house that represents her. For before passing away, Bernice made her maid promise that she would say that she committed suicide, apparently with the intention of making her unfaithful husband feel important.

*Chains of Dew* is set in New York and the Midwest Bluff City. The conflict of the play starts when the modernity of New York invades the traditional home of the Standishes in the Midwest, with new and shocking ideas about Birth Control. When New Yorkers appear in Bluff City to visit Seymore, a poet and banker who from time to time goes to New York, Seymore's traditional home and wife, Dotty, begin to transform by embracing modernity, something that makes Seymore utterly sad, but which makes Dotty feel extremely alive. Hence, the conflict when Dotty changes the spatial determinism the house enacts upon her, while her husband sinks miserably.

*Inheritors* is again set in the American Midwest, on a farm representative of pioneer times and romantic ideas. The main conflict in this play appears when Madeline, the young woman protagonist, rebels against the present state of these ideals, subverted and erased, as injustices of several kinds take place around her: conscientious objectors are in prison, her immigrant friends are being deported, and she is told to shut up for the sake of the family's status and unity in a WASP society.

In *The Verge*, the stage space represents places that reflect the protagonist's identity. Rebelling against her traditional heritage, Claire's deviation is firstly apparent in her places: a strange greenhouse used for experimentation with plants, and a tower which does not go round. Claire's continuous attempts to break away from tradition will reflect on the way she tries to defend her places physically, until eventually she breaks into violence to release herself from imposed forms.

*Alison's House* takes place in a house in the Midwest too, a house of tradition where the great poet Alison Stanhope lived and died in seclusion, and where her sister Agatha has always lived in self-chosen isolation. The estate is being sold, so all the family members are onstage packing. As the characters deconstruct the meaning of the house, they reveal their thoughts about Alison and about the burden that the place they have in society is for all of them. Only one character, Elsa, escaped from the house, something the other characters have neither forgiven nor forgotten. When Alison's secret poems are discovered and they all learn about the miserable life she endured, imprisoned in the house, the debate centres upon what to do with these poems, contrasting views on the extent to which the sense of belonging to the house and to the family must be regarded when one's happiness is at stake.

*The Comic Artist* is set in a house on the Cape Cod too, a house that stands for Eleanor's, the protagonist's, careful selection of the place she wants to live in. Eleanor had chosen this house, for her ancestors had lived here before, and she endeavours now to find the pieces of furniture and objects that belonged to the house in her attempt to feel attached to and secure in her home. However, the arrival of alien women, Luella and Nina, will not allow Eleanor to enjoy this place with Stephen, her husband, and their baby. Nina, now married to Stephen's brother Karl, was Stephen's lover and is back eager to demolish Eleanor's home. Finally, the last play treated in this thesis is *Springs Eternal*, which takes place in New York, in the house of a wealthy family, the Higgembothems. With the Second World War as background, Glaspell describes the idle state of the characters that do nothing to stop the war. Glaspell presents onstage pleasant time-passing activities, such as learning dead languages, writing empty memoirs or planning weddings, in sharp contrast to the violent deaths of soldiers in the Pacific. Paradoxically, these idle characters ostracise Jumbo, a young conscientious objector, who only at the end of the play is accepted in the family as he admits that he is joining the army to end the war.

Contemporary feminist theories about home are also very useful for the analysis of geopathology in Susan Glaspell's plays, given that, as suggested in the summaries above, most of her protagonists are female characters usually trapped in houses they cannot call homes, and women that, borrowing Ozieblo's words, "do fight for a space of their own" (1998: 196). As far as gender is concerned, Una Chaudhuri believes that,

Unlike gender, however, national and ethnic identities are often derived from or directed toward a *geography*; there is a *location* of identity based on race, nation, ethnicity, language – in short, all the elements that together or in part designate the notion of culture – that is often absent from the discourse of gender. (2000: 3, author's emphasis)

Paradoxically, later Chaudhuri suggests the relationship between home, domesticity and women and its theatrical and dramatic relevance, though she never takes this point any further. At the same time that she acknowledges the work that feminist scholars carry out on the figure of home and gender politics, Chaudhuri claims that “as far as the stage is concerned, the ideology we recognize as modern humanism was inaugurated by a decision not to remain in a home as artificial and stifling as a doll's house” (2000: 7). Indeed, the dramatic discourse of home shows that gender does have a geography, and that there is a location of gender identity. Henri Lefèbvre claims that,

Human beings do not stand before, or amidst, social space; they do not relate to the space of society as they might to a picture, a show, or a mirror. They know that they have a space and that they are in this space. They do not merely enjoy a vision, a contemplation, a spectacle – for they act and situate themselves in space as active participants. They are accordingly situated in a series of enveloping levels each of which implies the others, and the sequence of which accounts for social practice. (1991: 294)

That is, every human being knows that s/he is an active participant in the place s/he is, and that it is her/his action which will give way to the whole net of social relations. As Andrew Kirby affirms, “in a very real sense, *where* you are dictates *what* you are” (1982: 72, author's emphasis). More specifically, Judith Butler has claimed that gender is performative, “constructed by the reiteration of norms” (1993: 95). In *Gender Trouble*, Butler affirms that,

gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylised repetition of acts*. The effect of gender is produced through the stylisation of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self. (1999: 179, author's emphasis).

It is very interesting to notice that Butler includes the term “space” in her discourse on performativity. It is not only through the repetition of daily acts that gender is assumed.

But also, and very importantly, that repetition of acts is always enacted in places, and places are also subdued to norms. Referring to the interplay between identity politics and location Liz Bondi affirms succinctly, “‘Who am I?’ becomes ‘Where am I?’” (1993: 98). “Space commands bodies, prescribing or proscribing gesture, routes and distances to be covered. It is produced with this purpose in mind; this is its *raison d’être*” says Lefèbvre (1991: 143). Thus, it could be said that gender identity is instituted and constituted in space.

The emphasis that contemporary feminist geographers put on places and how these are gender-biased enhances this issue as a highly important one for the study of dramatic geopathology. In *Perceiving Women* (1975), the Ardeners also agree that women have a different space, which they labelled “the wild zone.” As Chávez-Candelaria explains, the Ardeners labelled women’s separate space as a ‘zone’ “to denote both its *physiology-derived* bounded space, as well as to capture the idea of the learned, *stereotype-derived* female space defined by the dominant structure” (1997: 249, author’s emphasis). Chávez-Candelaria sees that,

The ‘wild zone’ thesis thus identifies a fundamental paradox of female identity: on the one hand, a distinct female experiential, cultural space derived from an unrestricted (‘wild’) existence unmediated by inimical, imposed definitions of identity, and on the other the restricted women-space defined by and located within the englobing historical patriarchy without recognition of women’s human potential or achievement. (1997: 249)

It is very interesting to consider whether the figure of home, the core concept of geopathic drama, could be seen as a “wild zone.” McDowell and Sharp have stated that in the West the social construction of home has erected this figure “as a place of familial pleasures, a place of leisure and rest – for men a sylvan and tranquil respite from the rigours of the city or the workplace and for women a supposedly safe haven” (1997: 263). Nevertheless, for feminists scholars, “home may be as much a place of conflict (as well as of work) as of repose” (Massey 1998: 11), and this conflict may become greater once gender politics come into play. Soja and Hooper affirm that hegemonic power “actively *produces and reproduces difference* as a key strategy to create and maintain modes of social and spatial division that are advantageous to its continued empowerment,” and that “otherness” is assigned by a means of social-spatial



differentiations and divisions (1993: 184- 185, authors' emphasis). Lefèbvre has also pointed out that: "Space is divided up into designated (signified, specialized) areas and into areas that are prohibited (to one group or another)" (1991: 319- 320).

Although these scholars do not relate these divisions and prohibitions to what Lefèbvre calls appropriated spaces, exemplified by the figure of home, the field of women's studies has seen clear divisions within houses. Daphne Spain highlights the obvious gendered division of every day's places throughout history and across cultures. According to this critic, the organisation of space has always been a political construct to reinforce status differences between the sexes:

According to feminist geographers, a thorough analysis of gender and space would recognize that definitions of femininity and masculinity are constructed in particular places – most notably the home, workplace, and community – and the reciprocity of these spheres of influence should be acknowledged in analysing status differences between the sexes. (1992: 7)

Interestingly, though Lefèbvre does not usually take gender issues explicitly into account in *The Production of Space*, he affirms that "It is time for the sterile space of men, founded on violence and misery, to give way to a woman's space. It would thus fall to women to achieve appropriation, a responsibility that they would successfully fulfil – in sharp contrast to the inability of male or manly designs to embrace anything but joyless domination, renunciation – and death" (1991: 380). But while claiming that women must take "the sterile space of men, founded on violence and misery" to turn it into heaven is a simplistic recommendation, which relies on the ancient patriarchal belief that women are the angels of the house and which maybe only some radical feminists would take into account, Lefèbvre's piece of advice is important because very subtly he acknowledges that women do not achieve appropriation. That is, Lefèbvre questions whether the usual association and identification between woman and house is as real as some scholars believe. Valentine has affirmed that home has usually been associated with "family, childbearing, and hence emotional and physical sustenance" (1997: 288). Home has been constructed as woman's place, the source of stability, reliability and authenticity. "Home is where the heart is (if you happen to have the spatial mobility to have left) and where the woman (mother, lover-to-whom-you-will-one-day-return) is also" (Massey 1998: 180). Leslie denounces that "feminine identity

has tended to be more spatially confined than that of men. Whereas male subjectivity is defined in terms of control over space, female subjectivity becomes that which must be controlled by being bounded: the house itself may be seen as a system of control and surveillance” (1997: 304). According to this scholar, “home as a place has been central to the ideological construction of female identity” (1997: 307). I also agree with Rosemary George’s statement that, “The word ‘home’ immediately connotes the private sphere of patriarchal hierarchy, gendered self-identity, shelter, comfort, nurture and protection” (1999: 1). In this manner, independently from the fact whether women actually appropriate or not the house, that is, whether the house is woman’s place or where woman is placed, the truth is that the figure of home is a place that consolidates a woman’s identity and that can thus be read under the paradigm of the Ardeners’ thesis of the “wild zone.” That is to say, the figure of home identifies the spatial “paradox of female identity,” since the figure of home simultaneously may restrict and confer women’s identity.

The link between home and woman has played a vital role in literature and literary theory. As Rosemary George states, “In literature and literary theory, until quite recently, most considerations of the home have occasioned examination of the status of women. The association of home and the female has served to present them as mutual handicaps, mutually disempowering. Hence, the woman is incapacitated because she is ‘tied’ to the home, and the home is a shelter for the incapacitated” (1999: 19). This identification of women with home has led to a very important issue in literary tradition, the differentiation between public and private spaces.<sup>21</sup> Home, the private, woman’s place, has thus appeared in literary pieces with very different goals. On the one hand, one could consider Virginia Woolf’s claim for woman’s necessity to have “a room of one’s own” (2000: 3). Certainly, the private space offers women endless possibilities to express their identities. I also agree with Marta O’Neill’s reading of gendered spaces in Woolf’s work:

In *A Room of One’s Own*, Virginia Woolf’s manifesto on the dependence and independence of women, the author defines gender in architectural terms. This becomes a recurrent motif throughout both her fictional and non-fictional work. Both male and female characters are

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<sup>21</sup> It must be noted that the dichotomy between private and public spheres only applies to the white developed world, and it is white feminists who usually discuss this topic (see Rose 1993).

defined and limited by the spaces allocated to them through tradition and their attempts to expand on or escape from these social and creative impositions met with various degrees of success. The architectural metaphor demonstrates how men and women relate to space, both private and public, what spaces they occupy and how they create and recreate their own 'rooms,' both literally and figuratively. (2004: 85)

It must be noted that Woolf has exerted a great influence upon many women writers, and it could be said that Susan Glaspell, who also admired the British writer, was influenced by Woolf's representation of gendered spaces in her own works, as seen in this thesis.

On the other hand, the image of the room of one's own can also have a negative reading. Taking into account another of the most exploited feminist spatial metaphors, the attic, a room of one's own can also be negative when this is a room one has not created for herself and when its dwelling is forced. As Woolf muses on the closed door of the college library, she also claims, "I thought how unpleasant it is to be locked out; and I thought how it is worse perhaps to be locked in" (2000: 21). Similarly the protagonist's confinement to her room in *The Yellow Wallpaper* can hardly have a positive reading in feminist discourses. As the narrator says, "I should hate it myself if I had to live in this room for long" (1996: 1135). The narrator's descent into madness is deeply provoked by being locked in this room. Moreover, it is very interesting to bear in mind that, as Isabel Velázquez has suggested, though the house, the home, is woman's place, its owner has usually been the man.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the very architecture of the house is used to reflect power differences. That is, even within a house there are gendered spaces. Traditionally, rooms such as libraries, the billiard rooms or the studies were considered men's rooms, "less likely to be open to women than women's rooms to men," namely, drawing rooms and kitchens (Spain 1992: 112-114).

At this point, it seems sensible to question the necessity of keeping the traditional dichotomy between public and private spaces. "Life in the Western world has traditionally been divided into two spheres: the public and the private" (Fernández-Morales 2002: 163), a division into spheres respectively assigned to masculinity and femininity. Given that the private is controlled by the same social definitions working in

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<sup>22</sup> See Velázquez Valoria 1995: 124.

the public arena (woman's roles, socialising practices, power relations, etc), the long-held opposition between public and private spheres reveals itself as an artificial and deceiving artifice. I agree with Villegas-López and Domínguez-García on stating that,

From a historical standpoint, one of the commonest ways in which space and gender were understood – or else, how space appeared as gendered – was through the theory of the separate spheres, which discriminated between the public area, associated to maleness, and the domestic and private one, traditionally linked to femininity. As the model suggests, this theory is inherently oppositional and hierarchical, and supports an ideology that is both patriarchal and capitalist at heart. Therefore, and based on enslaving binary systems of the kind masculine/feminine, active/passive, etc., this gendered assessment of the spheres prescribed the behaviour and fields of activities proper to men and women, and was basically backed up by the original pair production/reproduction. Since then, the task of feminism has been one of “deconstruction” of those binary opposition that reinforce and “freeze the polarity male/female. (2004a: 11- 12)

Other feminist scholars have made similar points. For instance, Gillian Rose observes that “one of the most oppressive aspects of everyday spaces is the division between public space and private space” (1993: 17). And Rosemary George also denounces that there is “a rigid association of women with the private sphere so that eventually it [is] understood that this aspect of life [is] (and should be) outside of politics” (1999: 41). Indeed, it could be said that “The meeting point between the male and the female spheres takes place in the context of the home, which appears as the space of social and personal fulfilment” (Villegas-López and Domínguez-García 2004b: 20). As Keith and Pile affirm, “all spatialities are political because they are the (covert) medium and (disguised) expression of asymmetrical relations of power” (1993: 220). In this manner, Lefèbvre's classification of spaces as either dominated or appropriated does not appear as straightforward as this philosopher claims. The appropriated, i.e. created, spaces of the house are also the product of the “master project” governing in the outside dominated world, indoor and outdoor places are subject to the same rules. I also agree with Sarah Radcliff's dismissal of the binary opposition between public and private, because this dichotomy “reproduces socio-cultural categories rather than opening them up for analysis of the inter-linkages and interrelationships which between them give rise to this duality” (1993: 103). In theatrical terms, Una Chaudhuri also dismisses this differentiation between public and private: “In the staging and meaning of a play, just as

in the logic of naturalism, inside is not merely contiguous and continuous with outside but thoroughly penetrated by it; similarly, the private is not a realm withdrawn and protected from the public but fully determined by it” (2000: 30). Sharing the point stated by Chaudhuri and the geographers mentioned above, the present thesis analyses interior setting as a place of dramatic social interaction, where the same hegemonic power operates in the public and the private simultaneously.

Hierarchization and gendered spatial assignments within houses are easily detectable in Susan Glaspell’s drama through her preference for interior settings. It could be said that Glaspell’s interior settings, though these do not correspond wholly to traditional realism, fit into Brenda Murphy’s discussion on the usefulness of realistic settings in the American drama of the 1920s

interior settings provide not only a major means of characterization but, through their scenic images of domestic tyranny, a constant thematic statement. And because none of the women leaves her house for long, the settings provide clear definitions for the play’s action as well. In the best of them, the setting provides the major point of integrations for the whole representation. (1987: 153)

Una Chaudhuri has accounted for the usefulness of the realistic interior setting for characterisation and for setting the play in motion regarding dramatic geopathology:

The fully iconic, single-self, middle-class living room of realism produced so close and so *complete* a stage world that it supported the new and powerful fantasy of the stage not as a place to pretend in or to perform on but as a place to *be*, a fully existential arena [...] So literally global is the signification of the stage-home in realism, that simply to enter or leave it becomes a decisive-perhaps the decisive-dramatic act. (2000: 10, author’s emphasis)

But before entering into Chaudhuri’s catalogue of the dramatic elements that configure a geopathic setting, the convergence of the realistic domestic setting and geopathology must be further questioned. As discussed in the previous chapter, realistic settings were used to prove the environmental determinism that would explain a character’s psychological analysis. But the realistic theatricalisation of the literalized home reveals “the crisis of its concept. One sign of the crisis is the violent ambiguity, in realism, of spatial signs” (Chaudhuri 2000: 8). As William Demastes has claimed, Realism has a

“chameleon-like existence, changing colors at almost every turn and blending into a context appropriate to whatever needs a particular practitioner or critic deems appropriate for his or her goals” (1996: ix- x). Patricia Schroeder, nonetheless, provides a satisfactory definition of realistic theatre:

A realist play can thus be defined as one that reflects a specific social milieu in a particular era; that develops according to cause-and-effect sequences of actions; that ends with the resolution of some problem; that includes characters who react to the environment and action in complex and clearly motivated ways; and that attempts to convince the audience by all available theatrical means that the onstage action is, in fact, real (not fictitious) and occurring before them as they watch. (1996: 17)

But as Chaudhuri affirms, in many plays which have been considered purely realistic, as Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*, spatial signs go beyond their literal deterministic meaning, coming closer to the modernist enhancement of space as a figure of its own, as it happens with Nora’s famous slamming of the door.

Similarly, Glaspell’s dramatic works have usually been considered realistic, apart from *The Verge* and *The Outside*. This conception of Glaspell’s works as realistic owes a lot to Bach’s early essay “Susan Glaspell: Provincetown Players” (1978). In this essay Bach describes “three phases of dramatic development” in the Provincetown Players’ existence. He distinguishes “the initial phase of social realism, leading to a phase of realism vs. symbolism (or the realistic prose play vs. the symbolistic verse play), leading again into the last phase of renewed social realism interspersed with experiments in expressionism” (1978: 36). Bach identifies an inner conflict regarding aesthetics within the Provincetown Players, the tension between realist or representational drama and non-realist or presentational drama. According to this critic, this tension was merely generational, and in the particular case of Susan Glaspell, her experimentation with dramatic form relied more heavily on ideology and characterisation than on the dramatic structure itself.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, I side with Murphy’s denial of Bach’s point, believing that such a tension was present from the very beginning of the Players, and that the conflict between realist and non-realist art was obvious in the early plays of the Provincetown Players, including those by

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<sup>23</sup> For this discussion see Bach 1978: 38- 39.

Glaspell.<sup>24</sup> As Murphy affirms, and as discussed in Chapter 1, from its very foundation “the Provincetown Players became a cultural crucible in which the disparate and seemingly random ideas, aesthetics, and cultural values swirling around Greenwich Village in the teens and twenties were annealed into a practical aesthetics for the theatre” (2005: xv). Even though, paradoxically, Murphy reads many of Glaspell’s early plays as purely realistic, more contemporary readings of her plays, such as her icon *Trifles*, relate to Glaspell’s departure from Realism. For instance, if the dead canary had long been interpreted merely as a realistic device of cause and effect; the reason why Minnie Wright allegedly killed her husband, symbolic readings of *Trifles* see the canary as representative of Minnie’s imprisonment within the farm and the murder of her lively personality in the hands of her husband. Referring to *Trifles*, Linda Ben-Zvi lately sees the set not as a purely realistic *mise en scène*, but as an expressionistic one that “externalise[s] Minnie’s desperate state of mind” (2005: 174). As Brenda Murphy points out, Glaspell, as many other Provincetown Players, followed the pattern William Dean Howells described as Realism:

Howells called for an emphasis on character, and plots that were derived from life rather than imposed upon it. His concept of the ideal play was a completely believable representation of psychologically true-to-life characters in a recognizable contemporary situation through which important psychological insights or sociological observations were revealed in the course of the action. (2005: 78)

But if Glaspell followed this pattern to some extent, she also used “elements of the *mise en scène* in a figurative as well as representational way, [...] pushing the boundaries of realism toward the symbolic, non-representational theatre of a Yeats or a Maeterlinck, the theatre that is usually characterized as modernist” (2005: 78- 79). It could be said that one of Glaspell’s dramatic hallmarks is the way she fuses the representational with the non-representational. The present analysis of geopathology in Susan Glaspell’s plays will show that her rooms are not merely representational and deterministic. On the contrary, the present analysis will prove that Glaspell’s interior settings carry the more contemporary belief that identities are in a constant process of change. As Doreen Massey believes, peoples’ identities are constantly evolving, in the same way that the identities of places do. Identities are “unfixed, contested and multiple” (1998: 5). As

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<sup>24</sup> See Murphy 2005: 41.

will be analysed throughout this thesis, the characters in Glaspell's dramatic works engage in a dialectical and proxemic dialogue with place, reworking, revising and altering the meaning and appearance of the fictional onstage places they appear in.

Feminist dramatic theories are also very useful for analysing how Glaspell departs from Realism and her use of interior settings for the exploration of geopathology in drama. Firstly, in order to clarify the feminist perspective of the present work, some considerations about feminism must be made. Very briefly, as is well-known, the two main divisions within feminist studies are French feminism and Anglo-American feminism. The former is characterised by the emphasis on the creation and study of a female language, *l'écriture féminine*, different from the "phallogocentric discourse of the Western tradition", and only "occasionally do French feminists penetrate specific texts" (Cohn 1995: 94). Its most known exponents are Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva. On the other hand, Anglo-American feminist theory focuses on political, sociological, and anthropological issues mainly, although it usually makes use of linguistic studies as well. In other words, Anglo-American "feminists tend to be more aware than French of the contexts of the plays" (Cohn 1995: 94). Anglo-American feminism covers three types of feminist theory, usually known as bourgeois or liberal feminism, radical or cultural feminism, and materialist feminism. Elaine Aston summarises these three types of Anglo-American feminism in the following way:

Briefly, bourgeois or liberal feminism proposes the amelioration of women's position in society without any radical change to its political, economic, or social structures, e.g. without legislative reform. Radical feminism locates the oppression of women in the patriarchal domination of women by men, and advocates the abolition of the man-made structures which reinforce gender-based inequality. Materialist feminism has now widely been adopted as the nomenclature for the theoretical position which in the 1970s was labelled as Marxist or socialist feminism. This position critiques the historical and material conditions of class, race, and gender oppression, and demands the radical transformation of social structures. (1995: 8- 9)

Jill Dolan explains that bourgeois or liberal feminism has often been dismissed because it is not as subversive as it should be, and thus not very helpful to ameliorate women's everyday life. This is because it proposes changes for women which are always subject to men's approval. As for radical or cultural feminism, Dolan claims that it has been attacked because it is too subversive. That is, in radical feminism's willingness to



ameliorate women's situation, it has taken for granted that all women are equal, that there are no differences regarding class or race, since women, morally superior to men according to this type of feminism, share common qualities that overcome their differences.<sup>25</sup> Given that Glaspell herself claimed that "Of course I am interested in all progressive movements, whether feminist, social or economic" (qtd. in Rohe 1921: 18), a materialist feminist approach seems the most appropriate perspective from which to analyse geopathology in her plays.

I find it extremely important to bear in mind the specific historical features surrounding Susan Glaspell's life, her status as a bohemian white middle-class American woman. All these features led her to write about specific kinds of women belonging to a particular class, race, and gender, and to write plays asking for a radical transformation of social and political structures. Cheryl Black and Brenda Murphy have debated on the commitment of the women of the Provincetown Players to the feminist cause. Edna Kenton, who joined the Provincetown Players in 1916, defined feminism as "a troop of departures from the established order of women's lives" (qtd. in Murphy 2005: 36), a statement Glaspell would share. Murphy has called out attention to the participation of the women of Provincetown in the Feminist Alliance, a Greenwich Village organisation that in 1914 declared that, "Feminism is a movement, which demands the removal of all social, political, economic, and other discriminations which are based upon sex, and the award of all rights and duties in all fields on the basis of individual capacity alone" (qtd. in Murphy 2005: 37). Cheryl Black has explained how the women of the Provincetown Players, as active members of the feminist movement, used theatre with this same goal. According to Black, these women "were pursuing a formidable objective: to revolutionize all human relationships – to create a new world. Their very aspiration, including their desire to create an experimental theatre company, can be best understood as part of that objective" (2002: 31).

The materialist feminist perspective of the present thesis is based upon my agreement with materialist feminist Michèle Barret, who says that "[a]n analysis of gender ideology in which women are always innocent, always passive victims of patriarchal power, is patently not satisfactory" (1985: 81). Borrowing Jill Dolan's words

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<sup>25</sup> For more information on this issue see Dolan 1988, especially pp. 84- 86.

on materialist feminism, I think that Susan Glaspell makes us “look at women as a class oppressed by material conditions and social relations”, and that she attempts “to denaturalize the dominant ideology that demands and maintains such oppressive social arrangements” (1988: 10- 11), while never holding up the useless flag of women’s assumed passiveness, innocence, and powerlessness. It must be noted that, as Caneda-Cabrera has observed, this special re-working of space was typical of modernist women:

Since modernist women writers articulate alternative ways of underrating the world which have to do with their experience of displacement, the texts often become utopian space in which conventions and hierarchies are explored and likewise prejudices are exposed, particularly those grounded in socially constructed notions of gender. (2004: 242- 243)

As the analysis of geopatology in Susan Glaspell’s plays will show, Glaspell, as many other modernist women, uses space as the central point to denounce gendered power relations.

The dramatic history of the compatibility of Realism for some feminists is extensive. As many scholars have already pointed out, the debate on what makes a play feminist and on the appropriateness of using what is considered a “male form”, that is, Realism, began around 1930s.<sup>26</sup> Critics such as Catherine Belsey, Sue-Ellen Case, who defines Realism as “the prisonhouse of art for women” (1988: 124), Jill Dolan, and Jeanine Forte, among many others, find the usage of this form intolerable from a feminist point of view.<sup>27</sup> They argue that the classical conception of this form helps to maintain the fixity of males’ world as this form tends to represent the reality and thus the power structure men usually hold in real life. For instance, Judith L. Stephens has claimed that Glaspell’s adoption of standard dramatic conventions leads her to “reinforce the status quo” (1990: 285). According to Stephens the fact that in *Trifles* the female characters are realistically placed inside the kitchen throughout the play would make the audience perceive that the kitchen is inevitably women’s place. Nevertheless, this thesis will prove that readings of Glaspell’s plays such as Stephens’s are simplistic, and that they miss out how Glaspell is exploring the feminist possibilities of Realism, subverting the status quo at the same time.

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<sup>26</sup> See Gainor 1996: 53.

<sup>27</sup> See Belsey 1985: 51- 56; Case 1988: 124; Dolan 1988: 84- 87; and Forte 1989: 116.

Critics such as Elin Diamond, Judith Barlow, J. Ellen Gainor, and Patricia Schroeder have counter-argued the dismissal of Realism with feminist purposes in a brilliant way.<sup>28</sup> The most simplistic defence of the use of Realism with feminist purposes, which is still totally logical, is that women playwrights may use this form to put onstage what must not be repeated in real life: “Depicting what is can help create what should be,” says Patricia Schroeder (1989: 112). More interestingly, these critics also defend the use of Realism because “in realistic dramas, their realism adapted in sometimes subversive ways that merit detailed examination from a feminist standpoint” (Schroeder 1996: 8). Recently, feminist theatre scholars have focused on feminist means of subversion of the theory of the “male gaze.” The male gaze, a term made current in the 1980s by such feminist theorists as Laura Mulvey, Sue-Ellen Case, Teresa de Lauretis, and Jill Dolan, “describes as the controlling perspective of a theatre performance that of the male spectator,” and usually white and middle-class, “who identifies with the male hero and sees women as passive beings created to support the male or as pretty ‘doll-ed’ up to heighten his viewing pleasure” (Burke 1996: 3). As many feminist critics believe, Realism is the best means of conforming to the desires of the male gaze, given that this form tends to represent the same subjugation and objectification of women in real life.<sup>29</sup> Susan Glaspell, a Brechtian *avant la lettre*, makes use of a technique of estrangement later known as alienation-effect, whose aim, according to Brecht, consists in turning the object of attention “from something ordinary, familiar [...] into something peculiar, striking and unexpected” (1997: 143), or as feminist critic Elin Diamond says, “to denaturalize and defamiliarize what ideology makes seem normal, acceptable, inescapable” (1988: 85). By analysing geopathology in Glaspell’s plays, one will discover that the apparently realistic home settings Glaspell creates are used to denounce the problems arisen from trapping women in homes they do not want to be in, questioning, thus, their subjugation and objectification, and dismantling the male gaze.

It could be said that the rooms Glaspell presents onstage do not respond to traditional mimesis but to feminist mimesis. According to Elin Diamond,

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<sup>28</sup> See Diamond 1989: 58- 72; Barlow 1994: xiii; Gainor 1996: 53- 54; and Schroeder 1996: 47.

<sup>29</sup> See for instance Dolan 1988: 106.

A feminist mimesis, if there is such a thing, would take the relation to the real as productive, not referential, geared to change, not to reproducing the same. It would explore the tendency to tyrannical modelling (subjective/ideological projections masquerading as universal truths), even in its own operations. Finally, it would clarify the humanist sedimentation in the concept as a means of releasing the historical particularity and transgressive corporeality of the *mimos*, who, in mimesis, is always more and different than she seems. (1997: xvi)

In her plays Susan Glaspell takes the outside world not as an unmovable reference to copy, but as the ground for her feminist strategy. It could be argued that Glaspell's strategy is mimicry, "a representation of definition," "mimesis without a true referent - mimesis without truth" (Diamond 1989: 64). Though apparently her rooms stand for copies of real rooms from the outside world, inside these very rooms Glaspell keeps and shows how their spatial constituents, their walls, props, pieces of furniture, and even characters, muffle the ideological apparatus of this outside (patriarchal) order. Most of the geopathic female characters in Glaspell's drama are the victims of gendered power relations that usually subdue women to men. And Glaspell uses the rooms they inhabit to display and reinforce these female characters' malady. Likewise, if an analysis of geopathology in Susan Glaspell's drama will uncover Glaspell's denouncing of power relations in the outside world, it is also in the rooms she puts onstage that the dramatic solution to geopathology will come, as the final chapter of this thesis will discuss.

Related to the home setting, Chaudhuri renders what she finds common images to declare a dramatic place geopathic. As this scholar says, it is the very physicality of the rooms represented onstage that triggers the thematics of geopathology: "The structure of the room as a boundaried space, capable of keeping out as well as keeping in, allows it to function as a referent for such thematics as danger versus safety, infantile sexuality versus oedipal threat, political passivity versus active resistance" (2000: 93). In keeping with the American dichotomist yearning for a home but for movement at the same time, Pfefferkorn has observed that, because "home ties us to specific places, they are often experienced ambivalently, particularly by American men who tend to think of the home as a reassuring shelter and a millstone around their necks or a prison of sorts that limits their free choices and curtails their freedom of movement" (1991: 121). Agreeing with this idea, Chaudhuri claims that homes in modern drama are represented as either shelters or prisons, or both at the same time. As she says, "its status as both

shelter and prison, security and as entrapment – is crucial to its dramatic meaning” (2000: 8).

In this sense, there seems to be a connection between the features Chaudhuri applies to geopathic representations of home and Freud’s theory on “Das Unheimliche,” the uncanny. The uncanny “is that kind of frightening which leads back to what is known and long familiar.” The uncanny “belongs to two sets of ideas, which, without being contradictory, are yet very different: on the one hand it means what is familiar and agreeable, and on the other, what is concealed and kept out of sight.” “The uncanny is something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light” (Freud 1990: 340, 345, 364). Though this sense of fright cannot be perceived in every geopathic drama, dramatic geopathology spins around the same principles the uncanny does: the idea that home should be familiar and agreeable, a safe haven, while the figure of home can also be the place of conflict, conflict that should be hidden and that an analysis of geopathology in drama unearths.<sup>30</sup>

In geopathic drama the ideas that home is the place to anchor roots and to construct a fixed identity and that home is the place that highlights the character’s need for exile and exploration of new identities coexist. As Massey would say, the home setting can be used in modern drama to reflect both “the comfort of Being” and “the project of Becoming” (1998: 117- 124). Similarly, Chaudhuri explains how the experience afforded by geopathic drama “codes the world subjectively and binarily: here versus there, outside versus inside, belonging versus not belonging” (2000: 139). That is, the typical geopathic character wants to be there when s/he is here, outside when s/he is inside, and s/he wants to belong when s/he does not, or vice versa. Closely linked to these images the dramatic representations of homecomings, usually failed homecomings in geopathic drama, and dislocations appear. I agree with Chaudhuri’s

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<sup>30</sup> It is also tempting to analyse geopathology in drama, and concretely in some of Susan Glaspell’s plays, from the conjunction between Freud’s *Das Unheimliche* and his influence on developing what is known as the Female Gothic, a long-term tradition for American women writers. For a definition of the Female Gothic see Moers 1985: 91- 93, and Showalter 1991: 127- 131. Very briefly, according to these scholars American women writers make use of the gothic aesthetics of entrapment and closure in dark, grotesque, and isolated spaces to tell their stories of women’s oppression, rejection and subjugation. The influence of the Female Gothic on Susan Glaspell’s plays must be noted, even though its analysis is not the goal of this thesis. I am grateful to Eulalia Piñero for calling my attention to the influence the Female Gothic may have upon *Trifles*.

belief that the action of homecoming is used in modern drama “not to recuperate identity but rather to stage the difficulties, even impossibility, of such recuperation” (2000: 92). In Harold Pinter’s *The Homecoming* (1965) Teddy comes back home only to face the shocking behaviour of his family and to see how his wife abandons him for staying forever in the house as a powerful prostitute. Definitely, with this play Pinter reverses the traditional idea of homecoming, turning this figure into a device to reveal his geopathic representation of home.

Importantly, all the binary sets exposed above as well as the figure of the failed homecoming reveal another key issue in geopathic drama: the revision of the American Myth of Mobility, one of the main myths of American spatiality. A determinant milestone in the American Dream, and more specifically in the discourse of the Frontier Myth, the Myth of Mobility assured the infinite possibility to explore, to conquer, to progress. But as will be shown later, this foundational myth is used in geopathic drama to starkly confront the realistic closed home settings. Moreover, this figure is also questioned through the presence of immigration in modern drama. Chaudhuri explains that immigrant characters usually appear in geopathic drama to enlighten the binaries exposed before, since these characters do not belong to the place where they appear in. They are left out, they are eternal others:

Being an immigrant, unlike being an exile, is an evolutionary alienation, occurring over years, sometimes even over a lifetime. It is a process that inevitably raises the spectre of return, of the need to recover somehow the true meaning of that very real - increasingly real - place one has left behind. In a sense, then, the discourse of immigration comes into being on the far side of traditional geopathology, beyond the heroism of departure and the poetics of exile. (Chaudhuri 2000: 174)

Immigrant characters require a place, but they will only find difficulties in trying to find a location they can really call home, and even more difficulties taking into account the idea of homogeneity that underlines American culture. As Rosemary George observes, “The subject status of the immigrant, especially that of the non-white immigrant to the west, forces another literary reinscription of the self and the home” (1999: 8).

According to Chaudhuri, other key images and themes that can help to detect a geopathic home are generation confrontations, alcoholism, garbage, the destruction of

nature, and the buried child. Given that home is usually equated with family, it seems sensible to think that in the geopathic home the concept of family could also constitute a pathology. The most usual kind of confrontation within this pathology is the generational problem: parents against children. When family is the source of confrontations, usually each generation supports a different and opposed point of view regarding the conflicting issue. In geopathic drama this conflict is expressed in spatial terms. Family quarrels and fights take place within the walls of the house, and as the family members are forced to stay within these walls, a catch-22 situation is maintained. As J. Ellen Gainor has pointed out, “the (dysfunctional) American family drama [is the] the form that has emerged in the twentieth century as definitive for our national dramaturgy” (2001: 222). Plays such as Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman* (1948), Eugene O’Neill’s *Long Day’s Journey into Night* (1940), or Sam Shepard’s *Buried Child* (1978) exemplify this common theme in American drama. Chaudhuri also mentions these same plays to talk about this issue, but, as Gainor says, the phenomenon of the dramatic “dysfunctional American family” and its use as a metaphor for other problems beyond the family do not originate with these male playwrights, but a bit earlier

Yet on the American stage this antagonistic relationship between parents and children was by 1930 already emerging as *the* structure through which mainstream theater participated regularly in social critique. The family as microcosm for American society became the metaphor of choice for many of our most successful dramatists. The problems these families encountered developed though their dynamic, if not always fully articulated, relationship with their cultural moment; there was a direct correspondence between the escalating conflict within the family and the deterioration of American society, even if the drama never made that parallel explicit. (2001: 235, author’s emphasis)

This perception of family as a problem and the conflict of generations is another instance of how the American stage assimilated European theatrical morphologies. Already in 1909 George Lukács had pointed out the relevance of the conflict of generations as a theme in his *The Sociology of Modern Drama*,<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> George Lukács wrote *The Sociology of Modern Drama* in Hungarian in 1909. Its German translation appeared in 1914, and it was not until 1965 that an English version was available, when *The Tulane Drama Review* published it (see Bentley 1992: 423). It is important, however, to note that Lukács had already theorised on the conflict of generation as a dramatic motif in the modern European drama that influenced American drama, on the whole, and Glaspell’s dramaturgy, in particular.

The conflict of generation as a theme is but the most striking and extreme instance of a phenomenon new to drama, but born of general emotion. For the stage has turned into the point of intersection for pairs of worlds distinct in time; the realm of drama is one where 'past' and 'future', 'no longer' and 'not yet', come together in a single moment. (1992: 426)

Lukács's quotation also suggests the spatial importance given to generational conflicts in modern drama, synthesised here in the past vs. the future.

The pathologic family is also commonly associated, according to Chaudhuri, to problems of alcoholism. O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* masterfully exemplifies both. Many times throughout the play Edmund and James drink heavily; firstly, to mentally get away from the problems in the house, and secondly, while they have hard arguments with the patriarchal figure. Similarly, the protagonists in Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (1962) also drink to get away from the reality they cannot face, that their house, their family, is ruined, that the lie they had created to fulfil their sense of a family, their imaginary son, cannot not be sustained any longer. And the more they drink, the more they reveal the pathology of the place they inhabit. In extreme cases, alcoholism conjoins other kinds of violence apart from the verbal one. In Shephard's *Buried Child* the way the father is terrified as he has his head shaved again and again, causing him serious injuries, is a clear instance.

Images of garbage and the destruction of nature coincide with the depiction of place as destructive. When Chaudhuri points to images of garbage in geopathic drama, she refers in more general and symbolic terms to the idea that "America exemplifies a kind of prosperity whose history has already been written and whose residue is trash" (2000: 158). That is, if the land of opportunity has but garbage now, it can hardly offer nice places to inhabit. But reading images of trash in realistic settings, it could be said that this also symbolises that the figure of home seen onstage can hardly be a healthy container of the self, given that disorder reigns all around and garbage stinks. In keeping with the relationship Chaudhuri establishes between the figure of America and trash, the figure of the destruction of nature answers to the dramatic representation of men's desire to control space, triggering the deadly image of a decaying world: "In the logic of geopathology, the break with nature is a coherent, even *necessary*, item in a series of not altogether undesirable dislocations. The construction of identity as a negotiation with



the power of place, and the forging of heroism out of the device of departure, makes nature one of its casualties” (Chaudhuri 2000: 81, author’s emphasis).

The last figure Chaudhuri proposes to find a geopathic dramatic place is the image of the buried child. The buried child is often used in modern American drama to point out the consequences of a geopathic place, a place that triggers the death of the most fragile human beings. As Chaudhuri claims, this unexpected image “emerges as a privileged – even obsessional – device of the modern dramatic imagination” (2000: 18). The buried child of modern drama “is the unseen and unseeable force of circumstance; and circumstance [...] has long been understood as place, or rather as ill placement” (2000: 19). Sam Shepard’s namesake play *Buried Child* obviously epitomises this image, since “The tiny corpse that appears at the end of the play places its materiality against all the attempted symbology of the play, especially against the overdetermined mythemes of home and family” (Chaudhuri 2000: 111).

In order to discuss dramatic geopathology, this chapter has firstly surveyed the different definitions of space and place, both outside and inside theatre and drama studies. After presenting the different current approaches to the study of space and place in theatre, this chapter has focused on a semiotic approach that would facilitate the tools to detect and analyse a potential geopathic play. Though the main basis for both this thesis and this specific chapter has been Una Chaudhuri’s *Staging Place. The Geography of Modern Drama*, there has also been an attempt to enlarge Chaudhuri’s theory on dramatic geopathology by using other contemporary theories on place and space either from the field of theatre or foreign to it. This chapter also suggests the necessity to use feminist theories to accomplish a proper analysis of geopathology in Susan Glaspell’s plays. Feminist scholars, from the theatre world or not, have highlighted the role of gender in place and space, a reality that reflects upon Susan Glaspell’s works. Also, and more specifically, the works of theatre feminist scholars regarding Realism have been discussed, for their ideas will be applied to support Glaspell’s special use of realistic techniques.

In the following chapters Una Chaudhuri’s semiotic approach for the analysis of dramatic geopathology will be applied to Susan Glaspell’s plays. For this purpose, the images she proposes to configure a geopathic dramatic home will be expanded and

analysed.<sup>32</sup> Beginning with Glaspell's revision of the Myth of Mobility, an important American geomythology, the next chapters will detail the way Glaspell constructs what can be called geodichotomies, that is, binary oppositions between home as shelter and prison, in and out, here and there, and belonging and not belonging. The generation conflict, the status of immigration, alcoholism, the destruction of nature, and the buried child will be analysed as well throughout this thesis. Moreover, it is the goal of this thesis to find other feasible escapes from *victimhood of location*, different from *heroism of departure*. A different means by which characters negotiate their identities with place, overcoming, quoting Chaudhuri, "the power of place," without being forced to abandon it. In other words, the following chapters analyse the extent to which it could be said that Glaspell's plays respond to a dramatic geopathic pattern or not and how she expands this pattern with new images that could integrate the corpus of dramatic geopathology.

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<sup>32</sup> Appendix 1 offers a chart summarising the factors Chaudhuri proposes to detect geopathology in a dramatic work, together with other factors I provide myself as adding up to the configuration of geopathic fictional places and characters in Susan Glaspell's plays.

## **CHAPTER 3**

# **AMERICAN GEOMYTHOLOGIES REVISITED AS PART OF DRAMATIC GEOPATHOLOGY**

### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **AMERICAN GEOMYTHOLOGIES REVISITED**

#### **AS PART OF DRAMATIC GEOPATHOLOGY**

Travelling back in time, we could see that the very conditions of the birth of the United States configured this country as a geomythology in itself. America was seen by many as the Promised Land, the place where they could settle down, grow, and enjoy all the liberties the old Europe had denied them of. The still valid, though much attacked, American Dream heavily relies on this idea that America is a country of opportunity, a place where chances to improve await across the road, a place of regeneration where everybody can move from one place to another as long as betterment is their main goal. As Una Chaudhuri points out, there are many myths of American spatiality: “myths of infinite openness, of endless progress, of unlimited opportunity” (2000: 204). The present chapter on Susan Glaspell’s revision of American geomythologies as part of dramatic geopathology focuses extensively on the American Myth of Mobility, treated simultaneously with other related American geomythologies, for their conjoined effect on contributing to the dramatic configuration of victimage of location. These other geomythologies include the Pioneer Myth, the trope of America as “the City upon the Hill,” and what can be considered the umbrella term that covers these geomythologies, the American Dream. Once the analysis of the Myth of Mobility has been carried out, establishing who moves and does not move in Glaspell’s plays, this chapter will concentrate on issues related to mobility, mainly, dramatic invasion as a means of showing one’s mobility, and the possible punishment received for moving. I will also concentrate on the role those characters racially-marked as “Others” play in Glaspell’s revision of the Myth of Mobility and in the final section of this chapter I will deal briefly with addiction disorders that appear linked to the Myth of Mobility, as an answer to victimage of location in geopathic drama.

#### **3.1 The American Myth of Mobility**

One of the most obvious clues to begin considering whether a character might be geopathic can be found in an analysis of that character’s freedom or restriction regarding movement inside or outside places. Firstly, it is important to analyse the Myth of Mobility in physical terms, that is, whether characters can or cannot step outside or

inside spatial locations, those seen or alluded to onstage. Secondly, the Myth of Mobility may also be regarded in more metaphorical terms, that is, whether characters can or cannot move outside or inside other locations, such social order, family, patriarchy or given roles of behaviour. As Doreen Massey has pointed out, there is a close connection between mobility and identity

The limitation of women's mobility, in terms both of identity and space, has been in some cultural context a crucial means of subordination. Moreover the two things – the limitation on mobility in space, the attempted consignment/confinement to particular places on the one hand, and the limitation on identity on the other – have been crucially related. (1998: 179)

While these aspects will be analysed throughout this thesis, this chapter will focus especially on mobility in physical space and how this issue contributes to the dramatic victimage of location many of Glaspell's characters suffer from.

Regarding mobility, Una Chaudhuri reflects upon the importance of travel in the American literary tradition. As she claims, travel sets in motion a great number of American fiction masterpieces, such as Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851) and Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885), erecting thus "the literary archetype of the American hero as a man in motion" (2000: 125). Certainly, it is generally agreed that the American Myth of Mobility constitutes one of the cornerstones of the American Dream. From the very birth of the American nation, this country was advertised as the land of opportunity for adventures who dared to travel through untamed lands and helped to settle down and colonise this vast territory. Nonetheless, the American construction of travel as a powerful movement of adventure sometimes gets a negative transposition in its transfer to modern American drama. Many contemporary American plays, such as Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, Sam Shepard's *Buried Child* and Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie* (1987) include a revision or critique of the American Myth of Mobility within the physical configuration of stage spaces which turned out as dramatically geopathic. Plays such as the ones mentioned above do not but provide "a painful sense of physical limitation" to some of their characters (Chaudhuri 2000: 126), revealing the impossibility of the American Myth of Mobility for these characters, emphasising their victimage of

location because they are not entitled to pursue this myth inherent to the land they inhabit.

While Chaudhuri focuses on plays in which male characters suffer from physical immobility, in Susan Glaspell's plays the American Myth of Mobility appears as an appalling lie especially for her female characters. For as Doreen Massey claims, "The mobility of women does indeed seem to pose a threat to a settled patriarchal order" (1998: 11). Furthermore, an analysis of the Myth of Mobility promises to account for what has been called "Power geometry," a paradigm Massey explains as follows:

For different social groups, and different individuals, are placed in very distinct ways in relation to these flows and interconnections. This point concerns not merely the issue of who moves and who doesn't, although that is an important element of it; it is also about the power in relation to the flows and the movement. Different social groups have distinct relationships to this anyway differentiated mobility: some people are more in charge of it than others, some initiate flows and movement, others don't; some are more on the receiving-end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it. (1998: 149, author's emphasis)

That is, an analysis of who moves and who does not, who initiates a flow and who does not, and who, as seen above, is imprisoned, will reveal that "mobility, and control over mobility, both reflects and reinforces power" (Massey 1998: 150). This section focuses on this issue, beginning with a brief examination of the relationship between the Myth of Mobility and the American Frontier Myth, which together rooted the American Dream, for its impact on modern American drama. This analysis will prove how Susan Glaspell revisits some of the foundational American Myths by placing her characters in geopathic locations which they need to escape from.

The American Myth of Mobility is an integrating part of the American Frontier and Pioneer Myth. The American Pioneer Myth helped to foster the configuration of America as an enormous and open territory of opportunities where hard workers would move freely and surely succeed, and its mythology rooted deeply in the American literary tradition. Mark Busby, David Mogen and Paul Bryant have summarised the concept of the frontier that would become the focus of many literary pieces in the following terms:

[It] consists of a group of images, ideas, and expectations that came into focus during the European Renaissance and found its most dramatic expression in the development of American civilization. It begins with a sense of wonder at the infinite possibilities in the expanding world of the Renaissance explorers, for the frontier as the margin of the unknown marked opened the possibility of wonders in the unknown. The frontier as the limit of the settled and developed offered the possibility of new land, new resources, seemingly inexhaustible, yet to be gained. The frontier as the limit of existing society demarcated the line beyond which beckoned freedom from existing social and political restraints. In effect, the frontier was the gateway through which one might escape from the works of corrupt and corrupting humanity to the works of God in uncorrupted nature. (1989: 5- 6)

But as has been highlighted, women, among other groups, “were left out of the initial dream” (Busby, Mogen and Bryan 1989: 6), since “the frontier myth is a patriarchal story. It is gender related. It is his story, since the conquest of the continent has been encoded as a male adventure” (Ben-Zvi 1989a: 219). This early American geomythology, the Frontier Myth, is thus charged by the power of gender politics. In this concern, Ben-Zvi states,

She is clearly *other*. If he is actor, she is passive recipient of his action; if he breaks new frontiers, she secures familiar ground; if he seeks adventure, she seeks security. Such are the familiar lineaments of the familiar frontier myth. He becomes allied metaphorically with the new, she with the traditional, that is with home, family, security. (1989a: 220, author’s emphasis)

Hence, reflecting on the implication of the Pioneer Myth seems pivotal for an analysis of dramatic geopathology, since female characters, according to this myth, are mere unmovable accessories, secluded elements in a myth that, ironically, celebrates movement. Leslie Ferris has also pointed out that, unlike women, “Within this world the men are actively mobile, whether on horseback, stagecoach, wagon or train. Indeed, mobility and movement are often definitive of the ‘lone western hero’” (1989: 132-133). Likewise, as Ferris suggests, within the Pioneer Myth men usually arise as individual heroes, a paradox within the communality sense inherent to the Pioneer Myth that Ben-Zvi has also acknowledged.<sup>1</sup>

One of the consequences of this myth in literary history is that many women writers have “used the same symbolic structures and images [of the Frontier Myth],

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<sup>1</sup> See Ben-Zvi 1989a: 220.

though often in an inverted way,” with the purpose of demonstrating women’s exclusion from or even their fear regarding the frontier experience (Busby, Mogen and Bryan 1989: 6). The Pioneer Myth always exerted a great influence on Susan Glaspell’s works. Being herself the inheritor of a pioneer family, she always admired her ancestors, and even more, pioneer women. Talking about *Inheritors*, in a 1921 interview Susan Glaspell acknowledges the influence that her grandmother had on her: “My grandmother made the trip from Maine to Iowa in a prairie schooner. As a little girl she knew the Indians. With what regret I think that although I used to hang upon her words when she told of pioneer days and of pioneer upbuilding of a democracy I did not learn more from her” (qtd. in Rohe 1921: 18). The presence of pioneer women in Glaspell’s plays constitutes her tribute to the stories she heard as a little girl, to those pieces of history she regrets not having paid closer attention to. Nevertheless, Glaspell also had the influence of the stories told by Cook about his pioneer ancestors, and which she retells in *The Road to the Temple*. In general terms, in this hagiography of her husband, she summarises the pioneer experience in the following terms, where an especial emphasis on women’s experience can already be perceived:

Here is a queer thing: A man has a farm or an orchard or a mill in Massachusetts or New York. There is room enough for him where he is and he makes a comfortable living. But one day they get into a covered wagon, taking a few of their things with them, but leaving most of them behind. The wife kisses her sisters goodbye. She puts the children in the wagon – the whip is cracked, and they start down the hill, away from the house where she came the day she was married – past the house where she played as a child and in which her mother died. For a while friends come to wave at them – but soon they do not know the people any more and after a while there are no people. They ride through wide lonely country on their way to country which has more days, weeks and months between it and the known world. They go to Indians, rattle-snakes, the back-breaking work of turning wilderness into productive land. They go to loneliness and the fears born in loneliness. (1926: 3- 4)

The source of the dramatic concept of geopathology appears here. In Glaspell’s account one can perceive that women’s mobility within the American Dream is questioned regarding different aspects. As Jeannie McKnight says, the fact that it was men who chose to move to the frontier marks “the experience apart from that of the female, for having freely chosen to undertake the great adventure, men were often prepared to take their lumps in a way women were not” (1980: 29). In Glaspell’s words above, pioneer women are forced to leave the house they love, the place of their past, where their



relatives still live, to settle down in a hostile and unknown environment which is full of dangers. But far from submitting to a melodramatic view of women's role in the Pioneer Myth, where women would appear as victims, Glaspell frequently takes the opportunity to praise the effort these women made in order to help tame the country, building and arranging their homes to fight place as a problem.

Pioneer women become leading characters in many of Glaspell's plays, such as *Trifles*, *Inheritors*, *Close the Book*, as well as in some of her novels, such as *Brook Evans* (1928) and *Norma Ashe* (1942). In her amazing variation from the traditional version of the Pioneer Myth, Glaspell always emphasises the importance that women had in setting frontiers. It is not until the 1970s that historians began to publish books about pioneer women. After Nancy Cott published her *Root of Bitterness. Documents of the Social History of American Women* (1972), other feminist scholars followed her path and endeavoured to make pioneer women come to the surface. Rosalyn Baxandall, Linda Gordon and Susan Reverby edited *America's Working Women. A Documentary History - 1600 to the Present* (1976), Anette Kolodny published her *The Land before Her. Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630- 1860* (1984), and Glenna Matthews presented her research in *The Rise of the Public Woman. Women's Power and Women's Place in the United States 1630-1970* (1992). Glenda Riley focused more exclusively on the Midwest pioneer woman in her brilliant *Frontierswomen: The Iowa Experience* (1981). Much earlier, Susan Glaspell had seen the necessity of retelling the Frontier Myth from a feminist point of view. In 1896 she had written an article for *The Weekly Outlook* reading, "despite the fact that histories have mostly been written by men, who slighted or ignored (women) altogether, (women) were well worthy a place in the foremost ranks of the world's patriots, philosophers and statesmen ... Truly we owe more to woman than we seem inclined to put in our school books" (qtd. in Ozieblo 2000: 21). Definitely, Glaspell assumed as a role to (w)right the wrongs done to women in history books. It seems that with her emphasis on the pioneer female character, Glaspell is asking here to turn to the idealism and strength of these women from the past and to make use of these qualities in the present struggles for women's rights.

Glaspell's strongest example of pioneer woman is Grandmother Morton in *Inheritors*. *Inheritors* opens, symbolically, with Grandmother Morton sitting in her

rocking chair. Glaspell makes use of this character to show how hard and difficult the life of the pioneer woman was. But Grandmother Morton is not the fearful, quiet and indoors pioneer woman that history books had usually portrayed. She, like Mrs. Fejevary, deserves her place in the Pioneer Myth from which they have historically been removed. As a character, Grandmother Morton fights through her work and attitude the potential victimage of location the wilderness of the geographical site that the onstage fictional place, the American Midwest, seems to pose. While at the beginning of the play she appears “*patching a boy’s pants*” (104) and making cookies, actions that would make her fit into the traditional pioneer woman’s pattern, in the words of Grandmother Morton, pioneer women worked as hard as men did, both inside and outside the farm: “We worked. A country don’t make itself. When the sun was up we were up, and when the sun went down we didn’t. (*as if this renews the self of those days*)” (106).

Grandmother Morton came to Iowa in 1820 in a wagon. She and her husband did not have a roof, a fire, a doctor, or shops. As J. Ellen Gainor suggests, Grandmother Morton is “a motif of female courage and strength” (2001: 118), a motif frequently forgotten in history books that Glaspell recovers in this play. Indeed, Glaspell emphasises this idea as she makes the other pioneer characters in this play acknowledge women’s efforts. For instance, Felix Fejevary says: “[Grandmother Morton’s] strength is a flame frailness can’t put out. It’s a great thing for us to have her, - this touch with life behind us” (109). Nevertheless, Glaspell highlights the normal rule that women had to travel accompanied by their husbands, erasing any hint of individuality for women within this Myth. Grandmother Morton never went beyond the farm on her own, and she only got out of the walls of the farm to work with the animals or to help other farmers. This is also the case in *Close the Book*. Glaspell praises the effort of pioneer women as she describes Grandmother’s journey with her husband from New York to Ohio, and this character’s independence is hinted as Glaspell makes her journey alone from her present home in California to the Roots’ house. But when Peyton raises the question whether Grandmother moved from New York to Ohio because she was having an illegitimate baby, he suggests that his grandmother’s freedom of movement relates to her status as an “improper” woman, the kind of woman who has a baby outside wedlock:

GRANDMOTHER: Am I to be told – at my age – that I gave birth to an illegitimate child? [...]

PEYTON: Well, it just came into my head that it was possible. You see, grandmother, you having moved – I do wish you could see that I meant nothing against your character. Absolutely the contrary. But you having *moved* –

GRANDMOTHER: My having moved where?

PEYTON: You having moved from New York State to Ohio at just at time –

GRANDMOTHER: I always did like travel. Is that against any person's character? [...] But I'd like to know right now what there is so immoral in moving from one state to another – even if you are going to have a baby? (85- 87, author's emphasis)

When it turns out that Grandmother was indeed married before her journey to Ohio, and therefore her pregnancy respected the rules of decorum, Peyton produces “*a sigh of relief*” (89). Grandmother demonstrates that “a woman may move from one state to another without being dissolute” (89), suggesting then that in other cases it were dissolute women who had to move. This is what makes Peyton sigh with relief, because her Grandmother combined two things that seemed apparently incompatible to him: being a True Woman and travelling while pregnant. So, in terms of the present analysis of geopathology in Susan Glaspell's drama, it could be said that with *Close the Book* and *Inheritors*, Glaspell shows that her pioneer female characters have a problem with place as long as they cannot move freely, as the American Myth of Mobility promised. They must always travel accompanied by their husbands if they want to be considered proper women.

It is in *Trifles* where Glaspell more poignantly deconstructs the Myth of Mobility within the Pioneer Myth. In this short one-act play Glaspell makes even more explicit than in the plays seen above that the Myth of Mobility is a gendered issue, and a highly relevant aspect to be taken into account for dramatic geopathology. While in *Inheritors* Glaspell celebrates the effort made by pioneer women, in *Trifles* the most negative side of this effort comes to the fore as it materialises in spatial confinement. Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters are trapped in the Wrights' kitchen, symbolising pioneer women's entrapment within the farm. As Brenda Murphy has pointed out, Minnie's freedom to move is restricted “both physically and emotionally” (2005: 88). Besides Minnie Wright's confinement to the kitchen, her impossibility to move out is symbolised by the rocking chair placed onstage. Daphne Spain has pointed out the hierarchization inherent to the different kinds of chairs in the geography of home. According to Spain, “The armchairs symbolized the implicit hierarchy within the

family” (1992: 126). Armchairs and easy chairs were usually linked to men, while smaller chairs and rocking chairs usually belonged to women.<sup>2</sup> Spain’s point on the relationship between hierarchy and chairs is very interesting for a semiotic analysis of dramatic geopathology, since the chairs that appear onstage, their typology and the possibility of an analysis of which characters use which chairs can be revealing about gender politics. In *Trifles*, the rocking chair is Minnie’s. Firstly, it must be noted that the typical conception of the rocking chair in the outside porch vanishes here, since it is placed inside the farm. The rocking chair is not thus the comfortable piece of furniture to enjoy looking at the landscape. Instead, it is a deceitful device to reproduce movement while being spatially trapped. When describing how he found out that John Wright was dead, and how Mrs. Wright had told him so, Mr. Hale says:

HALE: and there in that rocker – (*pointing to it*) sat Mrs. Wright.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: What – was she doing?

HALE: She was rockin’ back and forth. She had her apron in her hand and was kind of- pleating it.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: How did she – look?

HALE: Well, she looked queer. (37)

It could be said that Minnie’s movement back and forth in her rocking chair represents her unfeasibility to move beyond. She, as the protagonist of Samuel Beckett’s *Rockaby* (1980), is trapped in space, awaiting death. It is also interesting to notice that Minnie does swap chairs and later sits in a small chair in the corner. As Minnie realises that she will be sent to prison, that any possibility that the Myth of Movement could open up for her has vanished, she secludes herself even more. She chooses now “*a small chair in the corner*” (38) that does not even reproduce any kind of movement. Glaspell enhances the symbolism of the rocking chair regarding the Myth of Movement when Mrs. Hale is about to sit down in it and she steps back. This proxemic relation to the rocking chair could be read as if Mrs. Hale were avoiding Minnie’s entrapment. At least, although one can see her as another prisoner in the kitchen, Mrs. Hale beats the symbolic prison this rocking chair stands for.

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<sup>2</sup> For more information about the relationship between chairs and hierarchy within the family, see Spain 1992: 126.

In stark contrast to Minnie's rocking chair and the women's fixity inside the kitchen, the male characters move all around the farm, going upstairs and to the barn, symbolising their mobility outside too. But while the kitchen appears as the place women cannot move out of, this place is also invaded by the male characters. Mrs. Hale sees in the way the male characters move around the kitchen a shameful invasion of Minnie's space. When the County Attorney complains about the dirty towels which he has to dry his hands with, Mrs. Hale answers back: "Those towels get dirty awful quick. Men's hands aren't always as clean as they might be" (38). Moreover, there is also the possibility that Frank, the Sheriff's assistant, who had been sent to the farm early that morning in order to make a fire, could have stained the towel after using the stove. Mrs. Hale observes: "Duty's all right, but I guess that deputy sheriff that came out to make the fire might have got a little of this on (*gives the roller towel a pull*)" (39). According to Mrs. Hale, the male characters invade and spoil the work done in the kitchen. This is why she arranges the pans under the sink, which the County Attorney "*had shoved out of place*" (39). Thus, it is not only that the female characters in this play are not entitled to the American Myth of Mobility, but also they have to stand invasions in their very places, what can be said to enhance their victimage of location.

But unlike Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters, who at least can go to church and join the quilting bee, Minnie Wright could not even attend either of these events. This is the reason why Minnie's quilt is one of the main symbols of the play, a symbol closely related to the Myth of Mobility, and which could be regarded as one of the clues to seeing Minnie as a geopathic character. As Karen Stein points out, "In the quilt patterns and the names for them [...] women told the stories of their lives" (1987: 255). Significantly, Minnie's pattern is a log cabin:

The log cabin pattern is constructed of repetitions of a basic block, which is built up of narrow overlapping strips of fabric, all emanating from a central square. That square, traditionally done in red cloth, came to represent the hearth fire within the cabin, with the strips surrounding it becoming the 'logs' of which the cabin was built. [...]he log cabin quilt came to symbolize both the hardships and the heroisms of pioneer life. (Hedges 1995: 64)

In Glaspell's dramatic strategy; Minnie's quilt is meaningfully erratic, half is "nice and even", but then "it looks as if she didn't know what she was about" (41). Mrs. Peters

and Mrs. Hale read these erratic stitches as Minnie's rebellion against the lie of the Pioneer Myth, symbolised in the log cabin, since in her contribution to the Pioneer Myth her hardships go unnoticed and her heroism silenced. Furthermore, the log cabin quilt pattern is a geometrical construction that could be said to represent the geographical enclosure that Minnie suffered. Minnie's inability to move out of the farm is symbolised in the perfectly closed square lines of the quilt. Thus, Minnie's destruction of the quilt pattern could be interpreted as her yearning to escape the enclosing form of the farm and her need to move beyond its walls. As many scholars have extensively analysed, it is precisely Minnie's erratic stitches that make Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters come to think that Minnie's life was really miserable.<sup>3</sup> This moment of recognition is called, borrowing Kathy Newman's term, "the metamorphizing spark of the story" (qtd. in Hedges 1995: 63), as it triggers a sudden change in the passive behaviour of the other two women in the play, prompting them to delete the incriminatory evidence they find.

Given that in *Trifles* quilting is also used to signify the common threads in pioneer women's lives, since all pioneer women found quilting absolutely necessary as "a uniquely American solution to the dilemma of keeping warm in an economy of scarcity before the introduction of central heating" (Stein 1987: 254), Mrs. Peters easily puts herself in Minnie's shoes and states that "I don't know as she was so nervous. I sometimes sew awful queer when I'm just tired" (41). The meaning of this affirmation is twofold. On the one hand, it points out the vast amount of work endured by these women in very hard living conditions. On the other hand, this "tired" can be interpreted in a more metaphorical dimension as being "tired of something or even someone," being tired of such an entrapment within her roles, the kitchen, and the farm, and even being tired of her husband. The myth of the log cabin and all it stands for, that is, the American Dream, the cornucopia, the idea of going from rags to riches, and also the idea of mobility represents a big lie to Minnie and to the other women in the play.

From Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters's perspective, Mrs. Wright was so overcome by this lie that this could be the reason why she had not sewn delicately or why she had

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<sup>3</sup> See for instance Ben-Zvi 1992: 153; Bigsby 1983: 25; Hedges 1995: 61- 62; Makowsky 1999: 53; Manuel 2000: 62; Showalter 1991: 145; Smith 1982: 175- 176; Stein 1987: 254.

destroyed this log cabin pattern. How can a red block stand for the hearth fire when she does not even have a working stove? How can she endure her life when all the hardships of her work overcome her? And, finally, how can she be proud of being a pioneer woman when there is nobody to celebrate her effort? Moreover, the fact that the men in the play laugh at Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters's debate on whether Minnie was going to quilt or to knot her patchwork is very meaningful. As both women engage in discussing a topic of great importance for them, the men's laugh demonstrates that they do not celebrate their women's effort embodied in the quilt, either. So in *Trifles* Glaspell uses the Pioneer Myth and the relative Myth of Mobility to dramatically develop her female characters' victimage of location. Firstly, and as Glaspell does in *Close the Book* and *Inheritors*, to highlight the place that women should have in the Pioneer Myth, and secondly, to point out the problem some pioneer women had with place when they were not allowed to move freely and instead they were kept trapped inside a farm.

Revisions of the Myth of Mobility are also interesting for an analysis of dramatic geopathology in plays which do not spin around or include pioneer female characters. Susan Glaspell insists on questioning the Myth of Mobility for women other than pioneers. Dotty, in *Chains of Dew*, is only allowed to go to certain socialising places, such as the Tuesday Club. In contrast, her husband Seymore regularly travels to New York, as Craig does to New York and Europe in *Bernice* while his wife always stays at home. Craig's and Seymore's trips are justified on the basis of their literary careers, as it was the fashion among many bohemians, in order to gather with other literary men and women and get inspiration for their writings, and in many occasions these male characters travel to meet their lovers. Craig's and Seymore's trips are seen as the moments of relief from their "trapping" ordinary homes. But the matter of their wives' possible need to move outside the house is generally left out of question, and less regarding any need for their intellectual developments. Dotty is eventually allowed to go to New York too, but she can only do it as long as her husband goes with her and as long as she behaves as a proper woman, that is, as the ideal wife Seymore wants. In a first place, Nora proposes: "Diantha had better pack a trunk and come with me [to New York]" (III, 34). But Dotty refuses, preferring to go to New York with her husband and only with his approval:

DOTTY: When you go to New York, I want to go too, that is, sometimes.

SEYMORE: Why dear, if you think you would enjoy it. You see what this has come to.

DOTTY: Sometimes I want to go too.

MOTHER: I think that would be a good idea, Seymore. It's safer.

SEYMORE: Well, of course. Dotty shall go to New York, if Dotty Dimple wants to go to New York. But not on wild goose chases, where she has to be rescued, shooing off friends who have meant much to me. (III, 40)

That is, Seymore accepts taking Dotty with him "sometimes," as long as she goes as Dotty Dimple. As Seymore refers here to Dotty using her whole pet name, in contrast to Nora's emphasis on calling her Diantha, he suggests she is allowed to come if she behaves how he wants her to, as a submissive wife that will keep apart from the new ideas his friends could exert on her. In like manner, in *Alison's House* Alison's only trip to Harvard, where she met her lover, was also with her father: "She had gone East, with Father, to Cambridge, Thirtieth reunion of Father's class" (688). After this trip Alison stayed at the Stanhope homestead her whole life. In Dotty's case, as well as in Alison's, it is quite clear that freedom of movement is a highly gendered issue, and that those female characters who care about being labelled other than proper women, take extreme care to travel only accompanied by some patriarchal figure.

It is sensible to consider that the Myth of Mobility should have opened up for women after the appearance of the New Woman,<sup>4</sup> and even more after the peak moment of 1920, when women won the vote in the United States. But it could be said that an analysis of this issue in Glaspell's play reveals this playwright's dubious consideration of this. In *The Verge* Elizabeth seems a New Woman character, but as soon as she announces that she has been to Europe in a school trip, our belief in her as a free character begins dissolving. It is not only that Elizabeth has travelled with her older teacher, Miss Lane, that is, under surveillance, but as she summarises her trip as "awfully amusing," unable to explain what she liked about Europe, her words suggest that her trip is just what "all the girls" do (74), not a self-motivated trip, to learn, to see the world, or simply for the fun of travelling. Moreover, when Elizabeth comes to visit her mother, she again travels accompanied by an older character, her aunt Adelaide. Considering Jhansi a New Woman in *Close the Book* is also revealing about her

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<sup>4</sup> The concept of the New Woman is developed in depth in Chapter 5.4 relating to the different kinds of female characters Glaspell writes about and the generational conflict as part of dramatic geopathology in her plays. See pp. 223- 224 for a definition of New Woman.



commitment to defend her freedom of movement. Whereas throughout the play she insists on taking the “open road,” it is suspicious that her boyfriend Peyton convinces her too easily to give up her wish. Though this will be analysed later in the final chapter of this thesis, it is interesting to say at this point that Jhansi abandons her ideals for the comfort that staying in the wealthy Root house provides.

Dramatic geopathology in conjunction with revisions of the Myth of Mobility can also be developed with characters who do move freely. Indeed, in several of her plays Susan Glaspell puts onstage female characters who do exert their part in the Myth of Movement without restraint, but their movements have sound implications in the dramatic action of the plays they appear in, fostering the development of victimage of location. Mrs. Patrick in *The Outside* could be regarded as a woman entitled to move. Importantly, Mrs. Patrick has no husband, which makes her freer. But as Mrs. Patrick discusses with Allie Mayo why she came from New York to the derelict old life-saving station in Provincetown, Mrs. Patrick reveals that her change of location was not a self-motivated movement. Though at first sight it could seem that Mrs. Patrick chose to come to live on the Outside, she claims, “I didn’t go to the Outside. I was left there. I’m only – trying to get along” (54). As will be analysed later, Mrs. Patrick, after being abandoned by her husband, had no place to go, and the most derelict place she could be at was the Outside. Thus, she just let herself be carried by the stream, trying to get along. She is not a female character completely free to move. Moreover, when she came to buy the old life-saving station, she let people believe “that her husband had died, and she was runnin’ off to hide herself” (51). Mrs. Patrick’s concealment of the truth about her husband suggests that perhaps at that time it was more acceptable to see a widow travel than an abandoned woman. But even so, the way Mrs. Patrick is treated by Provincetowners also suggests that seeing a woman travelling alone is not natural. As Kecia Driver McBride claims, “Although Mr. And Mrs. Patrick were initially welcomed as transitional members of the community, as summer folks with money, when Mrs. Patrick showed up later alone and wanted to set up housekeeping, the local people were more resistant to and curious about her presence as an unattached woman” (2006: 167). Thus, Mrs. Patrick could travel to Provincetown when she did so with her husband, but now that she is alone; her movements are regarded with suspicion. It is as if as an alleged widow, she should have stayed enclosed at home, and maybe in mourning.

This subsection would not be complete without, at least, a brief analysis of the restriction some of Glaspell's male characters experience regarding their mobility. Interestingly, Steve in *Suppressed Desires* could be said to be a geopathic character to some extent. Though Glaspell does not detail him with some of the conditions that will be seen throughout this thesis, Steve is almost forced to leave the place he lives in and that he loves because his wife has turned his work-place into a battlefield, because she wants to occupy his place, as will be seen below. Thus, in Glaspell's very first play the idea that male characters can also be negatively affected by the politics of location arises. It might be the case that Glaspell's commitment to the feminist cause would have broadened up at this time to take into account how some of the moral issues tying women to place do also tie men, or maybe it was Cook who wanted to reflect men as victims of locations. Recently, Kristina Hinz-Bode has concentrated on Glaspell's male characters, both in her drama and fiction. According to Hinz-Bode, many of Glaspell's male characters "share her female protagonists' sense of imprisonment and express a similar urge to rebel against the existing social order" (2006a: 202). Relating this statement to the present study on dramatic geopathology in Glaspell's drama, it could be said that some of Glaspell's male characters also have the Myth of Mobility restricted, forcing them to stay in a place that suffocates them.

If in *Suppressed Desires* one could see that Steve's enjoyment of the Myth of Mobility was somehow restricted, given that Henrietta does not allow him to peacefully enjoy a place considered his own, in *Alison's House* Glaspell presents explicitly how male characters can also be excluded from the Myth of Mobility, what turns into the main factor to consider these characters geopathic. It seems plausible that Stanhope rejects so utterly Elsa's departure from the family estate because she did what he wanted to but could not. As revealed towards the end of the play, he was also obliged to stay, because he was "the head of the family." As he regrets, "Sometimes I wish there weren't any family" (656). In the past Stanhope had renounced the idea of his elopement with Anna's mother. Stanhope's mobility was restricted, as it is now, by his role in the house as the head of the family. Likewise, his son Eben sometimes wants to "run away from all this" (662), from a wife he does not love and the life he has:

EBEN: Sometimes I feel I want something else.

STANHOPE: What?

EBEN: I don't know.

STANHOPE: And what about your family?

EBEN: Oh that's why I'm going.

STANHOPE: You are not going!

EBEN: Probably not.

STANHOPE: Going where?

EBEN: I don't know. Somewhere – where things are different.

STANHOPE: Things are not different anywhere.

EBEN: [...] Never mind, Father – guess I'm just talking foolishly, because the old place is being broken up. (670- 671)

This quotation discloses a lie implied in the Myth of Mobility, and this is that, in this play, no character, male or female, can move freely when family and tradition interfere. Though these issues will be analysed in depth later in this thesis, at this point it is interesting to highlight how these male characters are also forced to stay within the walls of the house that suffocates them. Both Stanhope and Eben are tied to their obligations, social, moral and family duties, reflecting spatial determinism. Both had to follow the family business, becoming lawyers. And Ted, Stanhope's youngest son, though he would rather enter into the rubber wheel business, is also obliged to study law and enter the family office. Stanhope says to Ted: "You will go in your father's office, which was his father's before him, and you will try and show more interest in the business than your brother does" (670). Glaspell visualises in spatial terms the impossibility these characters have to move out of the house, and tradition and obligations to the family the house represents, by placing them all in the library, since "there's no other room to go to. They're all torn up" (659). The rest of the play, as discussed in other sections of this thesis, revolves around how these characters become conscious of this entrapment and their argument on whether they can do something about it or not.

This first section has focused on Glaspell's revision of the American Myth of Mobility in some of her plays. The analysis of the concrete case of the Pioneer Myth reveals that Glaspell reworks it in order to give her female characters the place they deserve in history, and also, to suggest their victimage of location for being unable to move from hostile environments. But as shown in this section, Glaspell also revisits the Myth of Mobility in the case of more modern female characters, always to give

evidence of women's inability to move out of their places without the consent or company of male figures or the misuse other modern female characters make of their right to move. This section has also considered briefly the special cases of a few male characters in Glaspell's plays who also suffer from victimage of location because of the effects of the Myth of Mobility.

### **3.2 The Trope of Invasion in Dramatic Geopathology**

#### **3.2.1 Displaced Characters, Invasion and Victimage of Location**

Concerning the relationship between dramatic geopathology and those female characters who move without restraint, one of the most interesting aspects that can be found in Glaspell's plays is the dramatic staging of displacement. For the present analysis, displacement is understood as Keith and Pile define it, as a status where these characters are "out of place" (1993: 225). Before entering into the analysis of the role of displaced female characters in dramatic victimage of location, it is interesting to consider briefly the kind of woman these female characters stand for. Una Chaudhuri has pointed out that in pre-Ibsenesque drama there was a certain type of female character that was allowed to move. This character was the Fallen Woman, or "the woman with a past" (2000: 61). According to Chaudhuri, female characters who deviated from their traditional women roles, above all in sexual terms (such as prostitutes or unfaithful women), moved without any trouble, mainly because these women, considered social outcasts, had no place in society.<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, in *A Doll's House* Ibsen reworks this kind of character to present onstage the problematic of home. Indeed, what Ibsen presents in *A Doll's House* is the downfall of a female character. Nora falls from her position of traditional woman to being considered a fallen woman. Ibsen provided a turn of the screw to the issue, since his Nora's fault does not deal with sexual misbehaviour, but with gender roles. Nora's shameful past deals with her deviation from gender roles as she dared to tackle financial issues, an enterprise her husband should have been left alone to solve.

The characters through which Glaspell portrays the experience of displacement are always modern women, that is, women that under patriarchal lights could be seen as

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<sup>5</sup> See Chaudhuri 2000: 61.

“fallen” because of their deviation from traditional gender roles. It could be said that in Glaspell’s case, the way she employs displaced female characters reveals two phenomena regarding the politics of location. On the one hand, the use of displacement in defining a character would evince that character’s own geopathology. That is, if a character is “out of place” it could be quite easy to conclude that this character might have a problem with place. On the other hand, it is interesting to notice that sometimes Glaspell employs the displacement of a character precisely to bring a sense of displacement to the places that character goes to, that is, to places that belong to other characters who probably will be affected, maybe even reaching geopathology, by that sense of “placelessness” someone brought.

Rosemary George has observed that in contemporary literature the idea of home is usually reworked through characters who do not have a home, that is, through displaced characters. According to George, “The sentiment accompanying the absence of home – homesickness – can cut in two ways: it could be a yearning for the authentic home (situated in the past or in the future) or it could be the recognition of the inauthenticity or the created aura of all homes” (1999: 175). While it is true that displaced characters’ absence of home can lead to question what a home is, it is interesting to note that Glaspell offers a third way to confront homesickness. In Glaspell’s plays, displaced characters, dispossessed of a place of their own, endeavour to destroy other characters’ homes by invading and showing disgust at other characters’ houses. Nora in *Chains of Dew*, and Nina and Luella in *The Comic Artist* are female characters that have an active role within the Myth of Mobility, but who, I think, suffer from a sense of displacement that makes one regard them as invaders, losing the positive essence of this myth.

In the first act of *Chains of Dew*, it seems that Nora has a place of her own. “Nora Power’s office [...] tells you what this office is for” (I, 1). The posters of a mother with nine children and a mother with two children, the “*excess family exhibit*,” the lots of books, the working-table, the telephone and the mimeograph help to configure this place as Nora’s, stating her belief in and commitment to birth control. But the early appearance of the male characters, who are totally entitled to move, dispossesses Nora of the control over her place. Even in her office, she is told to shut up. Leon says: “Nora, will you let the conversation be possible?” (I, 21), and “No use

trying to interview a man with Nora around” (I, 31). Leon behaves as if this were his office. After complaining about Nora’s disruptions, he opens the door at the side and invites O’Brien to come in for the interview (I, 30- 31). Furthermore, while throughout this act we see Nora working with her mimeograph, listening to its sound, feeding it, taking papers and examining them, and answering the phone, her work is mocked in her very place. Seymore and Leon laugh at Nora when she gets enthusiastic about the phone call telling that Mrs. Arnold will donate a thousand dollars for birth control (I, 34, 34a). Moreover, Leon spoils her work. He tries to help her feed the mimeograph, but instead “blurs” it (I, 5), spoiling pages. That is, Nora’s place is invaded by the male characters in the same way that Nora will invade Seymore’s place in the following acts.

It is at this point that one wonders whether Nora is the sympathetic character most critics agree on. For instance, Barbara Ozieblo defines Nora as “the courageous realist with a will to transform society” (2006b: 17), and Kristina Hinz-Bode believes that

From the very beginning, Nora Powers is drawn as a character who has the playwright’s unreserved sympathy. She is presented as a likeable and energetic woman who meets her fellow human beings in an open, straightforward way. What is more, she combines a good-natured humor with a keenly observing eye, a combination which predicates her as the center of the play’s satire and its comic spirit. (2006b: 141)

While I agree on some of the points stated by these scholars, such as Nora’s courage, energy and humour, some doubts arise regarding her likeableness and sympathy. It must be noted that Glaspell herself was rather ambivalent regarding some New Women. Fletcher has pointed out that Glaspell did not completely agree with the radical women of Heterodoxy, evidenced by her irregular attendance to the Saturday luncheons of the club, and her commitment to the club, which was not as complete as other members’.<sup>6</sup> Though a New Woman herself in looks and ideas, Glaspell was the first woman to have her hair bobbed in Provincetown,<sup>7</sup> the fact that as a young, and yet anonymous girl in

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<sup>6</sup> See Fletcher 2006: 252- 253. I am not endorsing here the idea that Glaspell might not have supported the feminist agenda of Heterodoxy, which, as Ben-Zvi says, was enormously “significant for her theatre work” (2005: 127). I am considering instead what Glaspell’s commitment to the other women of the group really was. It must not be forgotten that, for instance, her Heterodite friend and member of the Provincetown Players Ida Rauh had a sexual relation with Cook.

<sup>7</sup> See Ozieblo 2000: 140.

Davenport, her middle-class background prevented her from joining other women's clubs, could have made her suspicious of the reasons behind women's clubs in general. Taking this background into account, I find it possible that Glaspell displays an ambivalent position towards Nora, wavering between sympathy and suspicion, being aware of the good Nora could bring to Bluff City, but also confusing Nora's motives and means.

On the one hand, it could be said that Nora's decision to go to Bluff City is based upon her commitment to birth control, and the need to spread the movement to the Midwest. On the other hand, there is another reason that makes Nora go to Bluff City and which hardly makes her appear as a nice character. She hopes to ruin Seymore's home life so that he goes to live permanently to New York, where, it should not be forgotten, they have a relationship. Thus, Nora can be regarded as a negative invader since one of her motives is to break up Seymore's home, a home where his wife and mother also live. So Nora is not paying attention to the collateral damage she might cause upon other characters. On the contrary, she is happy about her new mission: "*(With fervor)* I will disturb ten thousand toads," she says referring to Bluff City inhabitants, and "I will forget birth control!" (I, 37/36). If as she says, she will forget birth control, then it becomes clearer that it is her other goal, Seymore, that really interests her. Though the seriousness of Seymore and Nora's affair is not stated, Nora may also want to steal Dotty's husband and keep Seymore for herself the whole year, not only during his escapes to the big city. As Nora wonders what she will do with Seymore "after he's ruined," O'Brien remarks, "You may become attached to him – while ruining" (I, 37/36).

When Nora arrives in Bluff City, she begins invading Seymore's house little by little. To begin with, her name is symbolic, reminiscent of Ibsen's Nora, and Glaspell enhances the strength and energy this woman character is supposed to possess through her surname, Powers. However, her power is questioned when, as said before, she cannot rule over her own office, and the extent to which she is powerful in Bluff City is not that clear, either. But through Nora, Glaspell constructs a New Woman who considers herself powerful. Glaspell employs Nora's bobbed hair as a marker of the New Woman, the one involved in politics and women's rights. Her hair is a representation of her own identity and matches the place she works in, the office of the

Birth Control League. Glaspell describes Nora as follows; she “*has short hair. This does not mean she’s eccentric – it is not that kind of short hair. It curls and is young and vital and charming short hair. Nora also is young and vital and charming – devotion to a cause really doesn’t hurt her looks in the least*” (I, 1, 2). Glaspell enhances the contrast between Nora and the Midwestern house she is ready to alter through Nora’s look, and especially, her hair, which is a shock to Midwesterners. When she appears in Bluff City, her look is out of context, out of place. Mrs. MacIntyre, Edith and Dotty “*look at her hair, which snuggles up round the face in just the slant Seymore gave the doll*” (II, 1, 22).

Nora does not only begin her invasion of the Standishes’ home with her looks, but also with her body language. A proxemic analysis of the way Nora arrives at the Standishes’ and how she moves in this place reveals her “out-of-placedness” and it will help as well to understand how geopathology works in this play. Firstly, Nora comes to Bluff City even though she has not been invited. The very first time Seymore sees her here, he cannot but utter in astonishment, “Nora! You here?” (II, 1, 29). As soon as she is in the room she articulates her wish to rule over this space, to change its configuration: “Here is a table all prepared for me. (*Going to the bridge table*) But not in the presence of mine enemy, I hope. (*Taking some circulars from her bag*)” (II, 1, 26). After this verbal statement of invasion, Nora physically invades the room. Throughout Act II, scene 1, Nora displays her props, her birth control circulars. The quiet and traditional library of the Standishes becomes little by little a portion of bohemian New York in Act II, Scene 2. The library is turned into the headquarters of the birth control league: “Diantha thought we’d better have our birth control headquarters right here. She thought there were women who would come here who wouldn’t go to a – well, a more impersonal place. A less important place, is the idea” (II, 2, 1). For this purpose, Nora’s posters, the large family exhibition and literature on birth control are taken out of the packing box throughout the scene. The excess family exhibit is put against a corner of Seymore’s desk, as he helplessly witnesses how the “room where we see people – the people who come to see us” (II, 2, 3) is being transformed in front of his eyes. That the room is all together changed is also evident in the Maid’s hesitation whether it would be appropriate to bring visitors into the room. She asks whether she is to bring the two gentlemen, O’Brien and Leon, “In – here?” (II,



2, 18), and whether “I am to bring Mrs MacIntyre in *here*?” (II, 2, 21, author’s emphasis).

That the appearance of the library resembles more closely New York than the Midwest is also suggested by O’Brien’s remark that “But even dolls have bobbed hair out here [...] I didn’t know the West was like *this*” (II, 2, 19, author’s emphasis). By Act III, Nora’s New York has totally invaded the room. The birth control pictures on the wall say so. Mrs. MacIntyre, a very conservative female character, notices that Nora is breaking down the Standishes’ shelter, so she says to Nora: “Have you no idea of the sanctity of the home?” (II, 2, 28), and “You come here – you come here from your lawless, godless life – you enter a Christian home with your degenerate – immoral – ” (II, 2, 28), to what Nora answers “Don’t let me detain you. If you are going out” (II, 2, 28). It is not only that Nora has occupied space as she has pleased, but she feels entitled to rudely invite people to get out of the house. Now this place is ready to hold the “first general meeting. [...] It will be like our having a party. A birth control party!” (III, 2).

It is interesting to note that out of the three dwellers of the house Nora’s invasion only troubles Seymore. Seymore is the only inhabitant of the house to exclaim, “I do not understand this invasion” (II, 2, 10), “Good God, can’t a man be lonely without every person of his acquaintance starting in to do something about it? I tell you, you can’t mix things” (II, 2, 14). As for Dotty and Mother, they feel happy about Nora’s intrusion. Glaspell shows physically that these two characters were tired of being trapped in Midwestern structures and that they welcome the liberalism that Nora brings from New York in the way they eagerly help to display the family exhibit and the posters. It could be said that Glaspell employs Nora’s displacement and her invasion of Seymore’s house to make Dotty react and acknowledge her own need of a place of her own, a place where she can work for birth control,<sup>8</sup> and from this standpoint one could see Nora as a positive invader.

In other plays Susan Glaspell also exploits costumes and particular looks to suggest problems with place regarding displaced characters, invaders characters, and those characters who see their places occupied. In *The Comic Artist* Luella and Nina are

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<sup>8</sup> Dotty’s victimage of location and need for a room of her own is treated in full in Chapter 5, pp. 218-222.

visually configured as invaders through their costumes. Luella is described as “*a slight, chic woman. She is pulling off her gloves. Her travelling bag stands against the wall*” (9). “*Luella occupies herself with her vanity case, fixes her curly, bobbed hair under her hat. In the clearer light LUELLA looks her age. She is dressed too youthfully*” (12). She has dyed hair (14), and “*She is inappropriately dressed in silk; very high heels*” (67). Her daughter, Nina, who is announced onstage through the car horn, a symbol of her modernity and mobility, “*is so beautiful that all look at her for a moment – she pleased, seeming a little shy*” (26). But she is not shy at all. She is a kind of Helen of Troy, whose beauty will confront two brothers, Stephen and Karl, turning Eleanor’s house into a battlefield, and ruining their lives. “[M]en would destroy themselves for beauty such as hers,” says Stephen (23), an ominous remark that foreshadows the metaphorical destruction that Eleanor and Stephen’s home will undergo subsequent to Nina’s arrival, as well as Nina’s husband’s, Karl’s, death at the end of the play. In sharp contrast, Eleanor, Stephen’s dutiful wife, wears comfortable costume, “*what apparently were the things nearest at hand when she started out – a man’s blue coat over her sweater, a man’s grey cap*” (10). Luella’s and Nina’s astounding costumes of silk and fur coats, respectively, begin to make Eleanor feel attacked in her own house. Glaspell uses a similar device in her early *Suppressed Desires*. The fact that Mabel will constitute a problem for Henrietta is evident firstly in her costume. While Henrietta has the “*radical*” look of the New Woman (35), in keeping with the books onstage and the Washington Arch that can be seen through the window, which posit her as a New York bohemian, her sister Mabel is out of place with her “*rather fussy negligee*” (35). The negligee stands for women’s desirability in the eyes of men, and this will become the main problem for Henrietta. Once her sister has “invaded” the room, and that she is “psyched” by Dr. Russell, Henrietta’s problem is that Mabel is supposed to have a desire for Steve, Henrietta’s husband, a desire she is told not to suppress.

Turning back to *The Comic Artist*, it is not only through costumes that Nina and Luella invade Eleanor’s home. The way these characters despise the space where the play takes place is also revealing. Though Eleanor endeavours to arrange the room, removing her baby’s clothes, lighting the fire and the lamp, Luella, examines the room “*with unfriendly curiosity*” and with “*A half articulated expression of disdain*” (9), and she does not even sit when Eleanor invites her to. She just smokes compulsively while she reflects on the way she sees the house and Eleanor as “lonely” (12). Eleanor and

Nina's first meeting constitutes a bad omen: "*NINA does not know whether to kiss her sister-in-law or not. ELEANOR takes the initiative. They are not certain with one another*" (25). And Eleanor has many reasons to be uncertain about Nina's intentions, as revealed later on. Nina's first comment on the house is as unpleasant as her mother's, "And this is your house – the house we've heard so much about. (*A glance around, uncertain what to say*)" (26). And when she finds out what to say about the house, she refers to it as "Way out here?" (26). Furthermore, Nina even refers to herself as an invader. After an argument about Nina's intromission in their lives, Stephen and Eleanor tenderly become reconciled. However, Nina interrupts abruptly this tender moment:

NINA: Was I – (*Seeing the intimacy of the moment and more angry, but trying to control it.*) Oh – pardon me. I am intruding. Was I wrong in thinking I was posing for you? (79)

Nina acknowledges she is "intruding," and hypocritically apologises, only to bring back the issue that Eleanor was so angry about, that Nina was posing for Stephen, trying to occupy her place. Nina does not only exert her mobility by occupying a space that does not belong to her, but she wants to go further, invading Eleanor's personal space, her position as Stephen's wife.

Thinking about the reasons why Luella and Nina mistreat Eleanor, it could be said that Nina and Luella's problem is not that they feel superior to Eleanor, but that they are displaced characters also beyond Eleanor's house. They do not have a place they can call home, and thus they defend themselves by attacking the one who is trying to maintain hers. Nina and Luella come from big cities. Luella from the Latin Quarter in Paris, and Nina from New York, places where they have a great social life but not any real friend, and less a place called home. Luella is the first one to acknowledge that she has no place: "There never seems any place for me. (*Walking to the outer door.*) I'm leaving first thing in the morning" (74). But as Nina remarks, "You've been leaving for three days now" (68). Luella has no place to go. She would love to go to New York to live with her daughter. Nevertheless, Nina despises her, and she cannot forget that Luella abandoned her in Paris. Nina has been raised on displacement, so she has no place she can call home either. She chooses, thus, to invade Eleanor's shelter. This is totally obvious when Nina wants to take Eleanor's place as Karl's model. Nina bangs

the sliding door to come into Stephen's studio, giving way to her physical invasion. On purpose, she takes the chair where Eleanor had sat to pose for Stephen, and "*moves the jug ELEANOR left on floor beside the chair*" (49). Symbolically, Nina moves the jug out of its place as she is also trying to move Eleanor out of hers. But Nina's eagerness to put Eleanor out of her way does not end there. She leads Stephen to contribute to Eleanor's displacement. Suggestively posing for him, Stephen then "*Examin[es] the picture of ELEANOR again – impersonally. Takes it off easel, sets it on floor, against the wall, face inward. Puts new canvas on easel. Is soon busy with a bit of charcoal, sketching*" (49). Eleanor's picture is located facing the wall, and its place on the easel is replaced by the white canvas that will rank Nina above Eleanor metaphorically. At this point it is clear that Nina also wants to occupy Eleanor's place as Stephen's lover. Eleanor's fear comes true when she discovers her husband and sister-in-law embracing. Her house is torn down then.

In *The Comic Artist* Glaspell and Matson provide their displaced characters with an extremely important feature that would help to understand geopathology, and this is their fear of solitude. For these characters do not only lack a place of their own but they also have problems keeping acquaintances. Because people are usually linked to places, and friendships are created in locations, it is highly difficult for these people without a place to maintain their friendships, since they cannot feel wholly attached to the place and the people inhabiting that place at a given moment. Sooner or later, the displaced character will have to move to a different place. In *The Comic Artist* Nina and Luella clearly have this feeling, this fear of solitude, and they also transmit this fear to Stephen. It could be said, thus, that the characters of Luella and Nina are not only used to cause Eleanor's victimage of location in her own house, but also to show how displaced characters themselves have a problem with place. Firstly, Glaspell and Matson make use of games as a dramatic device to show a character's loneliness.<sup>9</sup> Luella is always forced to play cards alone (67), and although she asks the others to join her for a bridge game, she never succeeds (35, 86). Moreover, Luella is left alone in the house, something she cannot stand: "Why do you always leave me behind? I'm afraid in there alone. What are you all doing out here? (*Afraid, as no one speaks.*) [...] Karl, speak to me! (*With a harsh giggle.*) I'm your mother. (*Leans her head against him.*) What a hard

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<sup>9</sup> Indeed, card games can be said to occupy an important symbolic role within Glaspell's creation of victimage of location. This dramatic device is developed in Chapter 6.3, pp. 271- 273.

place for a weary head? [...] Oh, do come in the house. It's gloomy out here" (64). Luella feels scared when she is alone, triggering her nervous giggling when nobody answers back, and she tells all of them to join her in the house, as if the house could be a shelter from the gloomy night outside. The gloomy atmosphere is all around the place by now, a metaphorical use of the stage resources to pinpoint that Karl and Eleanor have just discovered their spouses embracing. But Luella is not the only character afraid of being alone. Nina cannot be left alone either. When Stephen leaves her all by herself in the barn, she later complains, "leaving me out there posing in an empty barn" (80). This solitude is symbolic of how she usually finds herself. As Eleanor believes, "I'm afraid you would often find yourself posing in an empty barn" (82).

To sum up, it could be said that through the way Glaspell portrays displaced women's mobility, the Myth of Mobility also poses a threat that can lead to dramatic geopathology through its misuse, as exemplified in the cases of Nora, Luella and Nina. Sometimes in Glaspell's plays displaced female characters react by invading other characters' places, a dramatic invasion carried out through their looks, proxemically and verbally; and which under no means can be seen as a positive solution. While it is true that Nora's invasion in *Chains of Dew* is much more sympathetically portrayed, it must not be forgotten that Nora is taking a place which is not hers. One wonders whether the sympathy towards Nora's invasion does not simply rely on the fact that she invades *Seymore's* place, because the library had nothing to do with Dotty, and that her invasion helps Dotty to ask for a place of her own at the same time that it will reveal Seymore's fake geopathology. Nonetheless, in the case of Luella and Nina in *The Comic Artist*, their invasion cannot be regarded from any positive angle because they are invading and troubling a place that is more Eleanor's than Stephen's. The following section also deals with the dramatic trope of invasion in dramatic geopathology, though from a more positive point of view.

### **3.2.2 Invasion in the Politics of Location**

A very interesting case to analyse regarding Glaspell's revision of the Myth of Mobility in conjunction with the dramatic strategy of invasion is Henrietta in *Suppressed Desires*. As Gainor has observed, "Much of the literary criticism of Cook and Glaspell's farce has been lightly dismissive, based on a view of the play as amusing but not aesthetically

substantive” (2001: 21). Some scholars have come to this conclusion after considering some words Glaspell wrote about this issue. Glaspell acknowledges the fun she had writing this play as she recalls when Cook and she were writing this play, as they “tossed the lines back and forth at one another, and wondered if any one else would ever have as much fun with it as we were having” (1926: 250). These words have led some scholars to affirm that “Glaspell apparently did not consider *Suppressed Desires* a serious effort and was surprised by its success” (Eisenhauer 2006: 122). But neither the fact that she had fun writing it nor her alleged surprise regarding its success can mislead us in taking this play seriously. Indeed, unlike other critics who have seen this play as a mere spoof of psychoanalysis, Gainor has demonstrated the importance of this play read in its context, revealing Cook and Glaspell’s portrait of “the tension between the lingering Victorian values of monogamous marriage and the merging bohemian code of free love” (2001: 20).

But what no critic to my knowledge has ever pointed out regarding *Suppressed Desires* is that a subtle topic Cook and Glaspell deal with in this play is the dramatic representation of struggles for space, a pivotal issue regarding dramatic geopathology. Henrietta Brewster is portrayed as a modern woman, and as such, she is allowed to move freely. A bohemian, Henrietta is not the dutiful traditional wife, but a modern New York woman interested in the new kinds of ideas treated at the Liberal Club, where she is an active member. Her husband, Steve, apparently respects his wife’s bohemianism. In this concern, Drew Eisenhauer claims that both Henrietta and Steve are “freethinkers,” the typical bohemian couple (2006: 122). Nevertheless, I would not say that Steve is a freethinker. Indeed, very early in the play Henrietta tells her husband, “You’re all inhabited. You’re no longer open to new ideas” (35). It could be said that Steve was a freethinker; similar to Henrietta, but that he is “no longer” that. Even if one considers Henrietta as too much of a bohemian, the fact that she reproaches her husband means that Steve’s commitment to radical streams is not as satisfying to Henrietta as it was before. At most, I would say that he tolerates his wife’s bohemianism, but only to the point when this begins troubling his own life and his own space.

Glaspell and Cook introduced a variation in the onstage place of the living-room that could have supported Steve's bohemianism. In an earlier version of the play,<sup>10</sup> there was a divan with leopard's skin on the stage, a clear symbol of the couple's equal embrace of modernity, because of the fabric, and even of psychoanalysis, given that this is a divan. Moreover, as it is Henrietta who writes on psychoanalysis, this divan could be a representation of her right to be in this living-room. However, by having removed the divan for subsequent versions of *Suppressed Desires*, the issues of Steve's commitment to his wife's ideals, as well as the ownership over the living-room complicate the play. My point here, which relates to geopathology, is that trouble arises regarding the studio apartment they live in.

The play opens in the living-room of Henrietta and Steve's studio apartment. The order of territoriality evinces in that a clear dividing line can be drawn between the zone of Steve's work-table, at the rear; and the breakfast table, at the front. This breakfast table works as a metonymical extension of the kitchen that will help to place the female characters in this play.<sup>11</sup> At the beginning, Henrietta and Mabel only move around this table and in the way to the kitchen. In a spatially dialogical way, in this first scene, Steve only moves around his work-table, this represents his concern for his profession. The table sports his architecture tools: his drawings, blue prints, dividing compasses, square, ruler, etc. Furthermore, a close survey of the way the characters relate to space suggests that the whole living-room is Steve's place. Firstly, Steve shows a kind of affective relationship with the room. When he wonders about quitting the apartment, following Dr. Russell's recommendation to leave Henrietta, he says that he will miss the view (44), an affective relationship with this place that Henrietta never displays. Moreover, when Mabel realises that their conversation on psychoanalysis disturbs Steve, who is trying to work, she claims: "Don't you think it would be a good thing, Henrietta, if we went somewhere else?" (40). Mabel accepts that this is Steve's place and that their presence disturbs him. Likewise, this is a place Henrietta lets Mabel stay in only when Steve is not there, again certifying that this place is Steve's: "Well, if

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<sup>10</sup> In the version published in the *Metropolitan*, there is "a divan" (1917: 19), and in a typewritten version in Papers of Susan Glaspell, Clifton Waller Barrett Library of American Literature, Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library, this is "a divan with leopard's skin" (1).

<sup>11</sup> Note that had the divan been kept onstage, the metonymical extension of the kitchen as Henrietta's place would have entered into a spatial opposition with Henrietta's modern roles, that of bohemian and writer, symbolised by the divan.

he's gone, you might as well stay here" (42). Interestingly, at one point, when Henrietta acknowledges that this is her husband's room, she reveals that she also has her own place: "Mabel and I are going to sit in my room" (42). Henrietta's statement uncovers the key fact that there are different locations for different owners in this apartment. The living-room is Steve's, but Henrietta has a room of her own. A room she, however, does not use to write her paper, as she prefers her husband's place for that purpose, and which makes the symbolic struggle that is going to take place even more important.

Steve's work-table becomes a symbol of the struggle for space in the play. Contrary to Steve's desire of possession over the table, this table is not absolutely his own. Repeatedly throughout the play he refers to the table as "my table," but as the play opens his table is already occupied by some material which is not his. On one end of the table there are Steve's assets, as described before, but the other end is loaded with "*serious-looking books and austere scientific periodicals*" which are Henrietta's (34). Although she has a room of her own, Henrietta endeavours to occupy Steve's working-table. This is more evident in scene 2. As the curtain rises Henrietta "*is at the psychoanalytical end of Steve's work-table, surrounded by open books and periodicals, writing*" her paper for the Liberal Club (43). The relation established between these characters and the stage properties in this place shows their subtle struggle for the room, and in this case we can see Henrietta struggling to occupy a place that is not hers.

Importantly, Henrietta is not attempting to occupy Steve's place for the sake of invasion. Her primary purpose, writing her paper, is as serious as Steve's work, so it might be the case that she sees that this place is more suitable for her activity, at the same time that with this occupation she suggests that what she does must be considered as important as her husband's job. I believe that through Henrietta, Cook and Glaspell argue how even a woman conscious of her right to the Myth of Movement, and who, as a New Woman, can move freely out, still has the need to move to places that do not belong to her, maybe a dramatic representation of the New Woman's anxiety to prove that she can occupy a man's place; Henrietta's demand that the existing power geometry be reworked. As Henrietta tries to avoid the place of the kitchen that would link her at home to a traditional woman role she rejects, she has to invade the part of the apartment that represents a male sphere, Steve's work-place, turning their home into an undercover battlefield of the sexes.



Thus, in *Suppressed Desires* Glaspell and Cook employ the trope of invasion to show that women are also entitled to the Myth of Mobility, but that the cost of this mobility might be marital trouble. The female protagonist, anxious to have a room of her own, invades her husband's room. But unlike the previous section, where the invading female characters could hardly be considered positively, the manner in which invasion is carried out in *Suppressed Desires* is addressed to make one wonder about the woman's need for invasion. To beat her victimage of location, Henrietta has to occupy another place, even if the casualty of this occupation is her husband's own geopathology. Given that this play is a comedy, Henrietta does not have to pay a high price for her adventure; the following section deals with the enactment of punishment to those characters in Glaspell's plays who dared to fight for their right to move to escape their victimage of location.

### **3.3 Punishment and the Myth of Mobility**

There are a few instances where Glaspell shows onstage female characters making good use of the possibilities the American Myth of Mobility provides. However, it is difficult, not to say hardly possible, to find an example within Glaspell's dramatic works where a female character makes good use of the possibilities the Myth of Mobility provides without receiving some kind of punishment. Margaret in *Bernice* is a New Woman who freely enjoys the Myth of Mobility, and she usually travels alone, as it is the case when she comes to the Nortons' house when the play opens. Though Margaret is a likeable character, Glaspell makes use of Laura, a traditional character, to attack her: "You who have not cared what people thought of you – who have not had the sense of fitness – the taste – to hold the place you were born to" (189). Laura's attack shows the difficulties to be faced by modern women who want to move freely. Madeline in *Inheritors* can also be seen under this light, but her right to move freely leads her, ironically, to prison and to her father's rejection. But even if she ends up in prison, what really matters regarding gender politics and the Myth of Mobility, is that Madeline chooses freely to leave the Mortons' farm and to go to jail, Madeline "turns that conviction into a choice that is one

only she can make for herself”<sup>12</sup> (Molnar 2006: 43).

Likewise, in *Alison’s House* Elsa has also exercised her right to move, but only to find herself dislocated and alienated when she comes back to her old house. Her experience could be seen as a failed homecoming. When she first appears she needs to ask:

ELSA: Father, may I – come in? (*One hand, palm up. Goes out towards him, timidly, but eloquent.*)

LOUISE: Certainly, you may not – not while (*But is afraid to go on, STANHOPE is staring so strangely at his daughter.*) [...]

ELSA: Perhaps I shouldn’t have come [...] I had to be here once more. I thought – perhaps it’s too much to ask – but hoped you would let me stay here. Just tonight [...] (*advancing a little to her father*). It doesn’t mean you forgive me, father, if – if you don’t. If you can’t. (662-663)

Elsa’s homecoming reveals her personal displacement. She had moved out of the family estate with her married lover, and when she comes back she is ostracised. She tries unsuccessfully to approach her father physically. She is later left alone in the library, feeling out of place and without having achieved her father’s acceptance. Moreover, she still has to suffer Agatha’s rejection. Agatha, the one character that never moved anywhere, cannot forget that “Elsa went away” (663), so when “*Elsa brings a footstool*” for Agatha, she “*disregards*” it (688), proxemically enacting her rejection.

So, as seen in the cases of Margaret, Madeline and Elsa, Glaspell shows that there is a price female characters have to pay for making use of their right to move, for stepping out of the places they have been given in society, for attempting to beat their victimage of location. These female characters turn into victims of location, by being, to greater or smaller degrees, verbally or physically punished in places they thought they would be re-accepted after their departure. The following section focuses on Glaspell’s

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<sup>12</sup> The reasons why Madeline decides to leave the farm and go to prison are complex and will be dealt with in depth in Chapters 4 and 7, see pp. 139- 141, 143- 145, 309, 351- 354, and 359- 360. Briefly, Madeline goes to prison utterly convinced of her idea of what America should be, and as long as it is not a place open to and respectful of people of different backgrounds, she prefers going to jail than being part of a hypocritical and quasi-blind society and family circle that, although aware of the injustices out there, still tolerate them.

portrayal of ethnically “Other” characters in her plays, characters who also become victims of location dispossessed of or in trouble regarding the Myth of Mobility.

### **3.4 Racism and the Myth of Mobility**

#### **3.4.1 Immigrant Characters as Victims of Location**

In the same way that Glaspell revisits the Myth of Mobility concerning female characters who move; in one of her plays she touches the theme of racially marked immigration. Indeed, one of the main topics in *Inheritors* is the lie of the Myth of Mobility for immigrants, which serves Glaspell to revise the conceptualisation of America as an open and tolerant place, and hence the basis for her immigrant characters’ victimage of location. As seen before, Chaudhuri considers immigrant characters as a device in geopathic drama to demonstrate that these displaced characters are “stigmatized as lawless and even pathological” (2000: 174). Indeed, it could be said that Glaspell employs immigrant characters in her plays to demonstrate the high price of the American myths of spatiality, for the price is “a crushing, numbing homogeneity,” “the weak spot in the omnipotent figure of America, for the reign of sameness eventually fails to conceal its antipathy to the very projects – of individualism and self-determination – that it is supposed to support” (Chaudhuri 2000: 204). Significantly, in *Inheritors*, place is not only a problem for unwanted immigrants, but also for the female protagonist who cannot stand how her place rejects the immigrants it welcomed so heartedly before, and who cannot stand that the American geomythologies have been subverted in order to reject the different and the individual in favour of a homogeneous community.

In order to arrive at Glaspell’s criticism that immigrants are not allowed to move freely in America, firstly we should consider other American geomythologies related to the foundational myth that configured America as a model of what a country should do to foster the happy coexistence of people from different backgrounds. With the purpose of showing that in contemporary America immigrants have a problem with place, Glaspell opens *Inheritors* with a more idyllic time, at least as far as immigration is concerned. Breaking one of the cornerstones of traditional Realism, the play opens in 1879, forty-one years before subsequent acts. Yvonne Shafer believes that this structure “emphasize[s] that American society faces the same problems and concerns despite the

passage of time” (1997: 48). But more interestingly, I think, Glaspell employs this theatrical structure as a device to explore the different responses of her characters to similar problems and concerns, and more concretely, to show that place constitutes a problem in the present while it did not to the same extent in the past.

In the first act Glaspell puts onstage pioneer characters from different backgrounds in order to show that it was the peaceful coexistence and collaboration between immigrants and settlers that enabled the colonization of America. Glaspell shows her own version of the Melting Pot. In his *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782), J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur coined the term Melting Pot in his attempt to define an American:

They are a mixture of English, Scotch, Irish, French, Dutch, Germans, and Swedes. From this promiscuous breed, that race now called Americans have risen [...] What then is an American, this new man? He is neither a European, nor the descendant of a European, hence that strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country [...] He becomes an American by being received in the broad lap of our great *Alma Mater*. Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world. (1981: 68- 70)

According to Crèvecoeur, America is “every person’s country,” where there is “room for everybody” (1981: 80- 81), where people from all around the globe come, mix, and evolve. Glaspell’s pioneer characters follow this pattern to some extent. The Mortons, white Anglo-Saxons, “laid this country at [the Hungarian Fejevary]’s feet – as if that was what this country was for” (138). They fought together in the American Civil War, and they worked together for “the dreams of a million years” (118), to make their country a better place. Moreover, acknowledging some truth in Crèvecoeur’s description of the “race,” their descendants mixed; Ira Morton married Madeline Fejevary. But it must be highlighted that Glaspell’s version of the Melting Pot does not respond to the traditional assimilation of every culture into the WASP, White Anglo Saxon Protestant, one.<sup>13</sup> As Veronica Makowsky has pointed out, though richer in land, Silas Morton feels poorer in education regarding his immigrant neighbors, the cultivated

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<sup>13</sup> Wilmer discusses the assimilation of immigrants’ cultures into the WASP culture and its consequences for American theatre, see Wilmer 2002: 10.

aristocratic Felix Fejevary and his Harvard student son Felix Fejevary the Second.<sup>14</sup> Silas says in this concern, “What a lot I’d ‘a’ missed if I hadn’t had what you’ve seen” (109); and, “I’ve been thinking what it’s meant all these years to have a family like you next to” (110). Glaspell does not make immigrants renounce their values to emulate the archetype of the Mortons, but each group offers what good they have, in this case, the Fejevarys their culture, and the Mortons their soil and ideals.

The idyllic community created by these characters seems to respond to some extent to what Bachelard has identified as *topophilia* in the literary tradition, which features a profusion of imagery of the happy place,<sup>15</sup> the opposite of dramatic geopathology. The fictional place in the first act of *Inheritors* can be considered a happy place because in spite of the difficult moments the pioneer characters experience, and some conflicts that will be later explained, as the act ends they dream of a better future, and future materializes in space through the construction of Morton College. Silas’s land conjoins Fejevary’s knowledge to create a place that, borrowing Charlotte Canning’s words, would “signify the cultivation of the landscape” (2002: 220). The manifesto of Silas and Fejevary’s college reads:

Born of the fight for freedom and the aspiration to richer living, we believe that Morton College – rising as from the soil itself – may strengthen all those here and everywhere who fight for the life there is in freedom, and may, to the measure it can, loosen for America the beauty that breathes from knowledge. (132)

That is, Morton College is envisioned as a microcosm of what these pioneers want America to be, the land where everybody is welcome, as the Mortons welcomed the Fejevarys, so that further mixtures of immigrants and Americans would go on making this country better and better. As a place of renewal where the mistakes made in the old Europe could be avoided, the possibility of victimage of location could be at least diminished in America.

Interestingly, Glaspell reworks at this point a cornerstone of geomythology in American history: the spatial metaphor of the City upon the Hill. As Barbara Ozieblo

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<sup>14</sup> See Makowsky 1993: 74.

<sup>15</sup> For Bachelard’s definition of *topophilia* and its importance for the poetics of space see Bachelard 1965: 29.

has pointed out, Morton College is a new “City upon the Hill” (1990: 69). Ozieblo’s remarkable observation is thought-provoking. In *Inheritors* the hill is relevant both in terms of space and as far as the plot is concerned. Dramatically the hill is important since it will give a place for the following acts to happen, once the college has been built there and as far as what this hill and this college should mean for the community. Glaspell suggests this dramatic importance through the kinesic language she makes her characters develop regarding the hill. Glaspell begins hinting at this relevance since in the opening act the hill cannot be seen from the front, but characters are continuously positioning themselves in front of the window or at the door so that they can contemplate the hill. For instance, the stage directions read that Smith is in front of the window, “*looking off toward the hill – the hill is not seen from the front*” (106), and after “*he stands at the door, looking toward the hill*” (107). After Smith has made his offer for the hill, “*Silas, who has turned so he look out at the hill, slowly shakes his head*” (108), and Silas later “*stands in the doorway and looks off the hill*” (109). As could not be otherwise, Glaspell also makes Silas continuously turn his head toward the hill while he tells his plans about building a college on top (113, 114), and finally, the climatic moment when Fejevary supports his friend’s dream, he also “*turns to the hill*” (118). In this manner, Glaspell provides the hill with a relevance confirmed in the following acts, when characters call attention to the privileged position of Morton College, looking down to the growing town. For instance, in Act II, Fejevary the Second and Senator look through the window toward the Morton farm while agreeing that “this is a great site for a college. You can see it from the whole country around” (123).

It seems obvious that Glaspell uses as a basis the image John Winthrop created in 1630 referring to the Pilgrim Fathers. In “A Model of Christian Charity” (1838) Winthrop declares enthusiastically: “For wee must Consider that we shall be as a City upon a hill. The eies of all people are upon us” (1989: 41). Morton College is located on a hill so that everybody can see it from the fields:

SILAS: A college should be on a hill. They can see it then from far around. See it as they go out to the barn in the morning, see it when they’re shutting up at night. ‘T will make a difference, even to them that never go. (114)

But while in Winthrop's statement the sentence "The eyes of all people are upon us" reveals a feeling of superiority on the part of the Puritan pilgrims, in Glaspell this similar statement stands for the college's duty towards the rest of the world, that is, to make the area better even for those who cannot go to the college. In Silas's respect, Morton College is not meant to be a mere point of reference, a place to look at. Morton College, in the words of this pioneer character, is "a hill of vision," where "visions of a better world [shall come]" (115), hence the relevance of the hill. Interestingly, Glaspell gives another turn of the screw to the trope of "the City upon the hill" and the "hill of vision" when it is due to the position of Morton college that Madeline will reveal against the community. It is when Madeline is up in the library of Morton College that she looks through the window and sees the abuses committed against the immigrant students. Madeline is forced to have the "vision" of what her place is, and she will react accordingly, as will be analysed later.

The connection between Morton College and "the City upon the Hill" gains further interest taking into account the religious reference Winthrop employed to create his geographical metaphor. Matthew 5: 14 reads "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and giveth light unto all that are in the house." Susan Glaspell reworks the connection between the City upon the Hill and light in the words of Grandmother Morton:

Light shining from afar. We used to do that. We never pulled the curtain. I used to want to – you like to be to yourself when night comes – but we always left a lighted window for the traveller who'd lost his way. [...] You can't put out a light just because it may light the wrong person. (118)

Although at first Grandmother Morton was reticent to give the hill for the college, now she realises that this institution will recreate the spirit they had at pioneer times; the ideal community that made colonisation possible. In the following acts Glaspell shows how this ideal of the City upon the Hill was damned to failure. For Morton College will light the right people, but it will also light the wrong ones, the racist characters who appear in the following acts, who will endeavour to make of the immigrant characters victims of location.

Susan Glaspell uses Morton College to show that this place is a problem for the immigrant characters in the second, third and fourth acts. Up on the hill, there are violent confrontations between Morton College students, aided by police forces, and Hindu students, which result in the Hindu students being injured and sent to prison, where they are given a taste of federal prisons before being deported. Linda Ben-Zvi has identified that “The models for the aliens in the play, who are being threatened with arrest and deportation, came from the numerous trials of Hindus, which were widely reported at the time, and against which [Glaspell’s] close friends, including John Reed and Eleanor Fitzgerald, organized protests” (2006: 289). In post-World War I America, political fundamentalism, whose leading mark is the artificial promotion of “a sense of oneness” (Leuchtenberg 1958: 205), especially closes up the Melting Pot to any racially-marked individual. Mary Heaton Vorse recalls: “Intolerance, hatred of foreigners, fear and prosecution of Negroes, spread like poison through the country” (1991: 159). In *Inheritors* Aunt Isabel says: “These are days when we have to stand close together – all of us who are the same kind of people must stand together because the thing that makes us the same kind of people is threatened” (147). “One-hundred per cent Americans” have to stand together against the “lice” (124), in this case the Hindu students struggling not to be deported. The Hindu boys will never be considered integrating parts of the community, since “This college is for Americans. I’m not going to have foreign revolutionists come here”, as Felix Fejevary states (134). But as this character also acknowledges regarding one of the Hindus, Bakhshish, “It is not what he did. It’s what he is” (139). Bakhshish and the other Hindu characters “are the wrong kind of strangers” (139). That is, it is not that Bakhshish was giving out leaflets on the right of India to be free from the British rule, but that he is a Hindu, a racially-marked outsider, an element that poses a threat to the idea of the WASP community the racist characters have. A character that breaks the illusion of homogeneity that helps racist characters be comfortable with the place they inhabit and enjoy their sense of topophilia.

According to Beverly Smith, in *Inheritors* Glaspell predisposes “audience members to tolerate marginalization and see [foreign-born individuals] in society’s midst as ‘other’” (2003: 137). It could be said that as no Hindu character appears on the stage, they are actually marginalised. Smith states: “The proximity between characters or groups, alignment of vertical and horizontal planes, placement of objects and set



pieces, and construction of the spatial environment, among other elements, are parts of the stage picture that make marginalization concrete” (2003: 134). In Smith’s discussion, thus, the Hindu characters do not come close to the American-born characters simply because they do not appear onstage, so they are never seen onstage forming part of an American group, and on the vertical plane Smith talks of, they are clearly at the bottom, absent from the scene and considered inferior by most of the characters in the play. Moreover, it is not only that the Hindu characters do not appear onstage, but neither does anything related to them or their culture.

Smith has also highlighted that one of the main modes of marginalisation appears when “Even those qualities appropriated by the mainstream can be interpreted negatively when exhibited by foreign-born characters” (2003: 133). In *Inheritors*, Glaspell makes the Hindu students dare to appropriate the words of an American icon, Abraham Lincoln, causing the immediate rage of some of the American-born characters. A reason the Hindu students use to state their right to express their discontent with the situation in India and with the isolationist policy of the United States is based on Abraham Lincoln’s “First Inaugural Address to the Congress” (March 4, 1861). In this speech, Lincoln justified a revolution when “by the mere force of numbers, a majority should deprive a minority of any clearly written constitutional right” (1989: 219). Tellingly enough, the Hindu students have also quoted Lincoln’s famous line: “Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it, or their revolutionary right to dismember, or overthrow it” (123- 124). Horace Fejevary the Second, and Senator Lewis state that the Hindu students do not hold the right to quote Lincoln because “He was speaking in another age,” “Terms change their significance from generation to generation,” and “The fact that they are quoting it shows it’s being misapplied” (124).

But these arguments do not show that the American-born characters appropriate Lincoln’s words better, as Smith would say.<sup>16</sup> Horace Fejevary really embodies the inferiority of some American-born characters regarding the appropriation of what they consider purely American. He says, “But gee - Lincoln oughta been more careful what he said. Ignorant people don’t know how to take such things” (124). No matter how

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<sup>16</sup> See Smith 2003: 133.

well-educated these immigrants are, these modern Americans, regardless of their own origins, see them merely as “foreign elements” threatening the safety of their soil. Thus, I do not agree with Smith’s point on Glaspell’s marginalization policy. On the contrary, I believe that what Glaspell is doing here is reworking the American geomythology that this country welcomes everybody, since the racially marked others do not even appear onstage as a symbolic representation of their common erasure from the American map. I believe that Glaspell employs their absence to denounce that many Americans reject foreign-born people and that their marginalisation is used to enhance the feeling of community those American characters want to maintain. Borrowing Gainor’s words, Glaspell literalises marginalisation by having the Hindu characters never appear onstage, “Nevertheless, she forces us to recognize the figures society has ostracized by making them integral, if invisible, to action” (2001: 127).

Regarding this issue of immigrants and community, it is interesting to consider George Revill’s discourse on the role of the community to establish and fix identity between people and places:

The value of community as a concept in this context is that it throws into prominence the tensions between senses of belonging which form ties between individuals and groups and between peoples and places. It is not that it enables us to identify a stable or even dominant set of social and cultural characteristics by which a particular place or group of people might be identified. Rather, community focuses interest on the processes that create a sense of stability from a contested terrain in which versions of place and notions of identity are supported by different groups and individuals with varying power to articulate their positions. (1993: 120)

The concept of community is strongly linked to place. The identity of a community only works if it also identifies itself with an area. This identification allows the community to define ownership over that area and to defend it against those seen as “invaders.” This is nowhere more evident than in the way “the one-hundred-per-cent” American characters in *Inheritors* see the land as theirs. “People are a bit absurd out of their own places. We need to be held in our relationships – against our background – or we are – I don’t know – grotesque,” says Aunt Isabel (149). Given that characters such as Horace, Fejevary the Second, or Aunt Isabel cannot identify themselves with the racially-marked Hindu characters, these must also be expelled from their place so that their community identity remains undamaged, and so that they can go on controlling power.

In the same way that these Hindu characters do not belong to this place, Glaspell also introduces verbally other immigrants who do not belong to it either. The following dialogue is revealing about this point:

HORACE: I'll show those dirty dagoes where they get off! [...]

FEJEVARY: Are you talking about the Hindus?

HORACE: Yes, the dirty dagoes.

FEJEVARY: Hindus aren't dagoes you know, Horace.

HORACE: Well, what's the difference? This foreign element gets my goat.

SENATOR: My boy, you talk like an American. (122)

Horace cannot tell the difference between dagoes and Hindus. A dago is indeed a pejorative noun used to refer to Portuguese, Italian and Spanish immigrants. For Horace, as for Senator Lewis, Latin and Hindu people are the same, foreign elements visually different from Anglo-Saxon Americans and who will never belong to this community, characters that do not but break their own idea of the "happy place" they think their country is.

It must be noted that, in the way Glaspell depicts America in *Inheritors*, it is America itself which opened its territories to these immigrants, only to marginalise them once inside. Glaspell puts her finger on the spot, deconstructing an important American geomythology, as she makes the only character that truly defends foreign-born characters, Madeline, claim, "They're people from the other side of the world who came here believing in us, drawn from the far side of world by things we say about ourselves. Well, I'm going to pretend – just for fun – that the things we say about ourselves are true" (139). Glaspell criticises that it is not fair to advertise America as the land of opportunity where everybody has a place, as the Myth of Mobility says, to simply reject newcomers once they are there. Glaspell goes a bit further suggesting that some American-born individuals also have a problem with the place ethnic American-born characters have in society. Ira Morton will never forgive the fact that his wife died when assisting a neighbour, to whom he scornfully refers as "that immigrant woman": "She [Ira's wife] choked to death in that Swede's house. They lived" (154). For this motive, Ira Morton hates the natural fact that his corn flies to the Johnsons, "them

Swedes” (155), what can be seen as a symbolic union of families from different backgrounds, and he cannot stand the idea that his daughter Madeline befriends Emil Johnson.

As seen in this subsection, the role of immigrant characters racially and/or ethnically marked as “Other” is important in the configuration of victimage of location in dramatic geopathology. In the case of Glaspell’s *Inheritors*, Hindu, Mediterranean and even Swede characters are turned into victims of place, either verbally or physically, as they are rejected within the place that once opened its borders to them. But as the next subsection analyses, Glaspell also shows that African Americans and Native Americans can become victims of place, expelled from American geomythologies.

### **3.4.2 African American and Native American Characters and the Myth of Mobility**

Going deeper into the interplay between revisions of the Myth of Mobility and racially marked characters for the study of geopathology in Susan Glaspell’s theatre, the cases of African Americans and Native Americans must be considered. The physical absence of these characters from the stage, as in the case of the Hindu students in *Inheritors*, symbolises their ostracism and, at the same time, suggests that, in spite of what other “genuine” American characters can think, say or feel, non-Anglo Saxon Americans are indeed rightful inhabitants of America. Though African Americans do not usually appear in Glaspell’s writings,<sup>17</sup> in *Inheritors* they appear symbolically in two ways. Firstly, and echoing the abolitionist past of the Mississippi Valley where the play is set,<sup>18</sup> a portrait of Abraham Lincoln is hanging on the wall of the Morton farm. This portrait is highly symbolic as it echoes the Civil War fought, among other political and economic reasons, for the right of African Americans to be free members with a rightful place in American society. Secondly, Glaspell is also witty to show that even if some Americans reject the idea of African Americans being part of country, they are. When in

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<sup>17</sup> There is another reference to African Americans in Glaspell’s *Close the Book* (71- 72). In this case, Glaspell brings to the front the issue of interracial marriages and mulatto offspring, to suggest the prosecution these racially different American born individuals stood. Given that there is only one comment about this issue in the play, the relationship it may have with dramatic geopathology is not developed in this thesis. For more information see Gainor 2001: 69.

<sup>18</sup> For the historical link between abolitionism and the area of the Mississippi Valley see for instance May 1960: 90.

Act II jingoistic Horace Fejevary is in the library dancing with Doris and Fussie, they practice some new jazz steps. Jazz music, a craze at that time, is of African American origin.<sup>19</sup> It could be said that Glaspell is here suggesting that African Americans should be seen as part of the American community as overtly as their music is.

The dramatic representation of geopathology in *Inheritors* is evident in the case of Glaspell's portrayal of Native Americans, characters that the playwright also employs to question the American Myth of Mobility. From the basic standpoint of who was here first, Native Americans should be considered one-hundred-per-cent Americans. They are not immigrants, but in Glaspell's *Inheritors* they suffer the same kind of marginalisation as the Hindu characters. Native Americans, displaced from their land and confined to secluded areas, become the victims of the white coloniser's Myth of Mobility, as they are kept on reservations, unable to move about freely. As she did with the Hindu students, Glaspell underlines a character's presence through its very absence. Their absence from the stage is meant to make the audience think about the actual marginalization of these legitimate native-born individuals.

All the details of the absent Native American characters Glaspell provides are based upon historical data, showing a level of accuracy that cannot but explain that the author aimed to praise these people that once helped colonisers to survive, at the same time that she condemns what was done to them afterwards. The Native Americans of *Inheritors*, the Sacs, actually occupied the part in the Mississippi Valley the play is located in, an area Glaspell knew well. Furthermore, Glaspell's depiction of the Sacs and their Chief Black Hawk seems to be influenced by George Cram Cook. There is a clear similarity between the portrait of Native Americans in *Inheritors*, and their portrait in Cook's accounts quoted in Glaspell's *The Road to the Temple*,<sup>20</sup> as well as in his play *The Spring* (1921).<sup>21</sup> *Inheritors* is set in what was the territory of the Sacs:

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<sup>19</sup> For the popularity of jazz at this time and its origins see May 1960: 337.

<sup>20</sup> For Cook's accounts in *The Road to the Temple*, see Glaspell 1926: 48- 49.

<sup>21</sup> Reviewers of *Inheritors* acknowledged the links between both plays. For instance, in 1926 N. G. Royde-Smith wrote an article for *The Outlook* in which the author pinpointed the parallels between both plays, importantly, Royde-Smith claims that both plays share common purposes, among which we could count that both playwrights wanted to show that "our forefather made steps towards the brotherhood of man – they smoked the pipe of peace with the Indian brave whose land they conquered," that is, that some white men and some Native Americans attempted to live peacefully, smoking the pipe of peace (1926: 25).

GRANMOTHER: This very land – land you want to buy – was the land they loved – Blackhawk and his Indians. They came here for their games. This was where their fathers – as they called ‘em – were buried. I’ve seen my husband and Blackhawk climb that hill together. (*a backward point right*) He used to love that hill – Blackhawk. (105)

But after the Black Hawk War (1832), their lands were bought: “For fifteen million acres of this Mississippi valley land – best on this globe, we paid two thousand two hundred and thirty-four dollars and fifty cents, and promised to deliver annually goods to the value of one thousand dollars. Not a fancy price – even for them days,” according to Grandmother Morton (106), or “twenty thousand dollars per year for thirty years,” according to history sources (Wesson 2004: np). The white colonisers wanted this place all for themselves. But this was not enough, and as Glaspell also echoes in this play, Native Americans were mistreated when they were put on reservations or exhibited in Wild West Shows. This was the case of Black Hawk, who in real life as well as in Glaspell’s play was exploited in a show: “poor Blackhawk [...] After the war – when he was beaten but not conquered in his heart – they took him east - Washington, Philadelphia, New York – and when he saw the white men’s cities – it was a different Indian came back. He just let his heart break without ever turning a hand,” laments Grandmother Morton (105). Black Hawk did move, but not in the free manner white colonisers would do. As many of the Glaspellian characters we have seen, Black Hawk was also forced to move, only to have his heart broken.

The main excuse to justify why Native Americans were excluded from the Myth of Mobility relies on their conceptualization as “tragic figures whose inability to adapt [...] necessitated their removal” (Moy 1995: 192). This alleged inability to adapt was further enlarged by the way Native Americans were portrayed in literature, so that the American geomythology could justify the erasure of Native Americans from their territories. Sarah Blackstone explains that in American drama, though the same could be said of other literary genres, “Native Americans have not often been portrayed as, or considered to be, complex individuals” (1995: 9), and that they usually appear as either “noble savage[s] – different, primitive, but basically non-threatening. [...] or] as blood-thirsty barbarians – screaming, shooting, and better off vanquished or dead” (1995: 12). Given that, precisely, what Glaspell wants to put into question is the necessity of the removal of Native Americans from their places, and thus, the concept of American

geomythology as it has been historically transmitted, she avoids any traditional binary description of Native Americans in terms of either evilness or nobleness. On the one hand, Native Americans are described in negative terms in Grandmother Morton's words:

One time I saw an Indian watching me from a bush. (*points*) Right out there. I was never afraid of Indians when you could see the whole of 'em – but when you could see nothin' but their bright eyes – movin' through leaves – I declare they made me nervous. (110)

It could be said that Grandmother Morton's words echo the fear Mrs. Rowlandson experienced. In Mary Rowlandson's famous *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Rowlandson* (1682), Native Americans are mostly described in terms of animal-like features. They are "hell-hounds," "wolves," "ravenous bears" (1682: 3) and "roaring lions" (1682: 32), as well as "barbarous," "black," "inhuman creatures," and "merciless" and "savage enemies" (1682: 3- 4). In Grandmother Morton's description, Native Americans are reduced to their eyes, hidden behind the bushes, and though Glaspell does avoid the word "evil," the fear these eyes produce on Grandmother hardly make the audience sympathetic to these Native Americans, since it seems that they are ready to attack a "nervous" Grandmother. Furthermore, Glaspell suggests that Native American also had their evil side, since "Will Owens' family was massacred just after this" (110). Smith comes to summarise the general feeling many Americans have about Native Americans as Glaspell makes him utter the apparently agreed "saying that the only good Indian is a dead Indian" (104).

Nevertheless, though it could be thought that Glaspell is precisely justifying Native Americans' marginalisation because of the evil they could do, her aim with *Inheritors* is just the opposite. Indeed, I believe that the disappearance of Native Americans from the landscape is the only obstacle for total *topophilia* for the pioneer characters in the first act. Glaspell's pioneer characters emphasise that nobleness is the main feature of the Sacs, not their evilness. Chief Black Hawk is referred to as "Noble. Noble like the forests" (111). Moreover, this nobleness becomes overt in Glaspell's reference to the American celebration of Thanksgiving. "The way they wiped us out was to bring fish and corn. We'd starved to death that first winter hadn't been for the Indians" (105), states Grandmother Morton. Glaspell does not want anybody to forget

that Native Americans helped colonisers to survive, sharing with them their very land and their goods. But through Ira Morton Glaspell provides another turn of the screw as her Native Americans feature an overt moral superiority at some points: “The Indians lived happier than we – wars, strikes, prisons,” says Ira (155).

Henry David Thoreau may have influenced Glaspell in this concern. In *Walden* (1854), Thoreau had denounced the way Native Americans “are degraded by contact with the civilized man” (1986: 78). Similarly, Glaspell blames Native Americans’ use of violence on colonisers, since as Grandmother Morton points out, confrontations with the Sacs began “after other white folks had roiled them up – white folks that didn’t know how to treat ‘em” (105). Silas says, “I can’t forget the Indians. We killed their joy before we killed them. We made them less” (118). Furthermore, Glaspell suggests Native Americans’ superiority through Silas’s belief that “‘Twould ‘a’ done something for us to have *been* Indians a little more” (111, author’s emphasis). The Native Americans referred to in this play had offered whites their land, friendship and help, and their belief that “the red man and the white man could live together” (105). In Glaspell’s depiction of the encounter between pioneers and Native Americans, there was space for everybody in the vast American country. But in exchange for their good intentions, Native Americans were expelled from their own territories, put on reservations and ignored in the community.

J. Ellen Gainor has also pointed out the relevance that Darwin’s phrase *survival of the fittest* played on the marginalisation of Native Americans in *Inheritors*:

FELIX: I think he [Darwin] might make you feel better about the Indians. In the struggle for existence many must go down. The fittest survive. This – had to be.

SILAS: Us and the Indians? Guess I don’t know what you mean – fittest.

FELIX: He calls it that. Best fitted to the place in which one finds one’s self. Having the qualities that can best cope with conditions – do things. (115- 116)

As Gainor explains, Felix repeats a common mistake of the era as he attributes this line of argumentation to Darwin, when “in actuality it was Herbert Spencer who appropriated Darwin’s phrase *survival of the fittest* to apply to man in society” (2001: 123). This philosophical rationale supported imperialist, colonialist, and racist policies,



providing a line of thought to justify people's displacement from their very territories. In other words, it could be said that Spencer's revision of Darwin's theories in social terms comes to enlarge the problem that arises from place. Now, there is a rationale to validate the occupation of other people's places and their mistreatment, and as such, it could be argued that Spencer's point plays a vital role in the configuration of geopathology. In this light, place as a problem can be said to have a biological justification. But even if it seems that Silas accepts Felix's argumentation about the survival of the fittest, Glaspell still makes Silas Morton feel ashamed of owning a piece of land that belonged to Black Hawk, given to his family for participating in the Black Hawk War,<sup>22</sup> and, significantly, Glaspell makes Silas also question who were the fittest to occupy this land: "Sometimes I feel that the land itself has got a mind that the land would rather have had the Indians" (111). At the end of the first act, Silas rejects a tempting economic offer for this piece of land, because he feels he has "to give it back – their hill [...] Then maybe I can lie under the same sod with the red boys and not be ashamed" (118). Silas finds out the way to reconcile with the Sacs in spatial terms: "That's what the hill is for! (*pointing*) Don't you see it? Plant a college, so's after we are gone that college says for us, says in people learning has made more: 'That is why we took this land'" (113). But as pointed out earlier, the absence of Native American characters in subsequent acts shows that Silas's dream has vanished. In the present time, Silas's place goes on being purely for whites, while Native Americans, as other racially-marked characters go on displaced, as Susan Glaspell denounces through her dramatic technique of highlighting the necessity of relocation through physical absence from the stage.

As seen in this section Glaspell employs dramatically racially marked absent characters with a double objective. On the one hand, to show how these absent characters are victims of a place that does not accept them as part of the community. And on the other hand, because these characters' mistreatment also constitutes the main problem for other characters to be completely happy with the place they inhabit. On the whole, it could be said that Native Americans as well as the Hindu students, synecdoche extensions of displaced "Others," should have a place in Glaspell's America if the geom mythology of the American Dream and its related Myth of Mobility are to be read

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<sup>22</sup> Susan Glaspell's dramatic treatment of the land in *Inheritors* as the reason for the Black Hawk War and its relevance for the present study of dramatic geopathology is expanded in Chapter 6.3, pp. 266- 267.

faithfully. The following section discusses Glaspell's interest in using addictions of different kinds related to her revision of American geomythologies.

### 3.5 Geopathic Disorders

Finally, it is interesting to consider Glaspell's revision of the Myth of Mobility related to addiction disorders. Chaudhuri affirms that key factors to detect a geopathic character in modern drama are also what she labels "geopathic disorders," namely, drug addiction and excessive alcohol consumption (2000: 58). In a dramatic world where characters cannot exert their right to move,

Addiction functions as a mechanism for displacing that ideal [home] into a performative sphere, creating a sort of stage within the realist frame; on this addiction-produced stage, the grim conditionality of realism's worldview is suspended, and a liberating kind of homelessness is temporarily achieved. (2000: 58)

As Chaudhuri has analysed, Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* masterfully exemplifies this point through Mary's morphine addiction and her sons and husband's alcoholism.<sup>23</sup> It could be said that O'Neill, a heavy drinker himself, made use of alcohol in his play to portray all the problems his characters have with the place they are in. All his sailor characters are drunkards, and *The Iceman Cometh* (1947) epitomises alcohol as the characters' solution to escape the reality of the places they live in and to imagine new lives in new places far from Harry Hope's bar. Susan Glaspell's characters, however, rarely display any addiction. Only two cases can be pointed out. Firstly, Luella in *The Comic Artist* is a compulsive smoker. Her tobacco addiction, a sign of modernity too, can be seen as a geopathic disorder that helps her cope with her own sense of displacement and with Eleanor's house, a place that, as seen above, she invades and cannot leave in spite of the disgust she apparently feels for it.

Regarding the dramatic representation of alcohol addiction as a solution characters use to escape place as a problem and their incapability to move out from it, it seems Glaspell consciously avoided this topic. A possible reason behind this is Jig Cook's heavy drinking "which had progressed over the years from private bouts in

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<sup>23</sup> For her discussion on geopathic disorders in O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*, see Chaudhuri 2000: 58.

Davenport, to elegiac group drinking in Provincetown and New York, and finally to almost daily inebriation during their last year in Greece” (Ben-Zvi 2005: 264). Glaspell’s biographers Barbara Ozieblo and Linda Ben-Zvi tell of the many times that Glaspell had to mother her drunk husband, as she would also later do with Norman Matson. Glaspell asserts in *The Road to the Temple*: “A woman who has never lived with a man who sometimes ‘drinks to excess’ has missed one of the satisfactions that is like a gift – taking care of the man she loves when he has this sweetness as a newborn soul” (1926: 324). Indeed, Glaspell saw drinking as a positive experience for the healthy growth of the Provincetown Players. Wine was never short at the meetings of the group, as it helped the group to “become one,” and when they were running short of liquor, Cook would speed up: “‘Give it all to me,’ Jig would propose, ‘and I guarantee to intoxicate all the rest of you.’ He glowed at these parties” (Glaspell 1926: 265- 266). Glaspell herself also used to drink, sometimes too much. “Susan was usually sympathetic to people who had problems with alcohol, perhaps because she herself did” (Noe 1983: 71). Nevertheless, though she enjoyed drinking and saw positive qualities in inebriation, she was aware of the fact that excessive consumption was not an activity to be proud of. One of Glaspell’s greatest worries after publishing *The Road to the Temple* was that Cook’s and her family might “make a fuss” over the too much drinking she describes in her book (Glaspell qtd. in Ben-Zvi 2005: 315). Consequently, alcohol ingestion as a factor to detect a geopathic character is only suggested in one of her plays, *Alison’s House*:

LOUISE: You haven’t been drinking, have you?

EBEN: No, but I will. (662)

Louise’s question makes one wonder how often Eben drinks to get away from his problems. As seen earlier, Eben is one of the few male characters in Glaspell’s plays who can be said to be a victim of location because of his inability to move out. Though Eben answers “No” to his wife’s inquiry, his readiness to drink is suggested by his “but I will.” He shows his volition to use alcohol to escape the reality that he cannot move out of the place where he lives, what can be read as an example of alcohol ingest as a feature to detect dramatic geopathology at least in this play.

To sum up, it could be said that Glaspell consistently reworks American geomythologies in her plays, which has proved an interesting revision for the present analysis of dramatic geopathology. While since early American historical and literary traditions have depicted this country as a vast land, open to those who wanted to contribute to the growth of this nation, and where they could move freely, Glaspell reworks in some of her plays those foundational myths, and especially highlighting the validity of the Myth of Mobility for her geopathic characters. Indeed, it could be said that the Myth of Mobility exists as a painful reminder of the liberty to move Glaspell's victims of place should have, as well as it suggests a clash between the myth of home and the myth of travel so inherent to American culture and tradition. As seen in this chapter, Glaspell especially focuses on the lack of freedom of movement regarding her female characters. Unlike most of her male characters, from Glaspell's pioneer women to her more contemporary characters, these women are never allowed to travel alone. And when they travel alone, they are displaced characters, usually regarded as invaders and characters to be rejected by the other characters, because they deviate from how proper women are supposed to behave. This chapter has paid attention to Glaspell's revision of American geomythologies regarding foreign-born and racially-marked characters, who are also expelled from the Myth of Mobility and turned into victims of location, because of the threat they supposedly pose to the sense of community. This chapter has also briefly taken into account the tiny extent to which Glaspell employs addictions to underline her characters' victimage of location in her plays. After having analysed how some of Glaspell's characters may be initially considered victims of location because of the impossibility of their physical movement out of their locations, the following chapters study other spatial factors that uncover dramatic geopathology in Glaspell's plays, and which spring from her revision of the Myth of Mobility. In the following chapter I will concentrate upon the relationship between the geopathic character that cannot move out and dichotomist conceptions of dramatic spaces: isolation vs. communality; the configuration of home as either prison or shelter; and inside vs. outside.

**CHAPTER 4**

**GEODICHOTOMIES**

**IN THE CONFIGURATION**

**OF DRAMATIC GEOPATHOLOGY**

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **GEODICHOTOMIES IN THE CONFIGURATION OF DRAMATIC GEOPATHOLOGY**

Home is a place to escape to and a place to escape from. (George 1999: 9)

According to Una Chaudhuri geopathic drama “codes the world subjectively and binaryly” (2000: 139). That is, the configuration of place as a problem relies heavily on geographical dichotomies: here vs. there, inside vs. outside, enclosure vs. boundlessness, and so on. Before going deeper into the analysis of dramatic geodichotomies in the configuration of geopathic homes in Susan Glaspell’s plays, it seems appropriate to analyse in the first place the very geography of the sets Glaspell presents onstage. The following section will point out that Glaspell’s favourite setting is a geographically isolated one, which implies a first geodichotomy; the dramatic representation of isolation vs. community. This geographical isolation will become pivotal to understand the following geographical dichotomies analysed here: the configuration of home as either prison or shelter, and the character’s urge to be inside or outside these locations, hallmark geodichotomies in the configuration of place as a problem in modern drama. It must be noticed that though the establishment of dichotomies in the work of Susan Glaspell may be thought an artificial enterprise, besides the fact that dichotomies do not always work, these dichotomies are still useful for the sake of analysis. In spite of the difficulties and risks of establishing spatial dichotomies, in this chapter I attempt to disentangle the geographical oppositions Glaspell employs, both physical and metaphorical. Although some of the dichotomies analysed here could be grouped together at different points of this chapter, I have decided to keep them apart based upon the different language Glaspell employs to create these images, and the different purposes, relevant for dramatic geopathology, Glaspell could have had in mind when creating these images.

#### **4.1 Geographical Isolation in the Face of the Community**

It is interesting to note that in Chaudhuri’s paradigm to detect dramatic geopathology there is no mention to the significance of physical isolation. Nevertheless, it could be said that physical isolation is a key factor for dramatic geopathology. One of the

problems a character may have with the place s/he dwells in is precisely that s/he feels in complete isolation. Moreover, this isolation is part of a long-held dichotomy, that between individualism and communality. Indeed, this geodichotomy is at the core of American Transcendentalism, a tradition that heavily influenced the writings of Susan Glaspell. For Transcendentalism places the individual first, but always trying to come to terms with the community this individual is part of. In her book *Susan Glaspell and the Anxiety of Expression* (2006), Kristina Hinz-Bode focuses on the dichotomy individuality vs. communality regarding language and communication. For Hinz-Bode believes that “both in her life and her art Susan Glaspell set her highest hopes on the possibility of successful self-expression and communication” (2006b: 21). As this scholar says,

Susan Glaspell frequently discusses the problem of identity in precisely this context. In many of her plays her protagonists are presented as individuals whose well-being is threatened as they struggle to both free themselves of and at the same time define themselves within a web of communicational contacts which create the notions of self and other in constant reciprocal process. (2006b: 31)

Regarding this relationship among character, identity, and community, Marcia Noe has included location in the matrix that Glaspell employs to present her characters. Noe has analysed how in some of her plays Glaspell uses region as a metaphor of isolation, suggesting the dichotomy between the individual and community so important for the present analysis of dramatic geopathology:

In the regional dramas of Susan Glaspell, the Mississippi Valley and the Massachusetts coastal region function as metaphors for isolation: the isolation sought by the artist from a society that threatens his talent, the psychological isolation that is a refuge for the individual from whom life has exacted too much emotional tribute, the isolated environment that can precipitate madness and violence if some contact with others is not provided, the political isolationist spirit of the post-World War I era. In *Trifles*, *Inheritors*, *The Outside*, and *The Comic Artist*, Glaspell shows through her regional settings that isolation can be a powerful force in crushing the human spirit, and that our connections with others in the human community are crucial to our development as individuals and are inextricably bound up with our individual destinies. (1981: 84)

The present section analyses this dichotomy as presented in spatial terms, that is, the dichotomy between geographical isolation and community. This section delineates the

tensions Glaspell establishes, and which are fundamental to understand geopathology in her plays, by placing an individual in isolation in the face of the community. Individualism might be seen as something positive, but not when individualism is grounded on forced isolation. At the same time, communality might be seen positively if this is formed by free individuals helping each other, but in a negative way when community forces the individual to behave in a determined way. In both cases, either when the individual is secluded in a state of isolation s/he has not chosen, or when the community is a burden for the individual's self-expression, we can find dramatic geopathology.

Marcia Noe's preliminary observation that Glaspell employs isolated regions to show "the effect of isolation upon the human spirit" (1981: 79) is the starting point to understand how Glaspell constructs place as a problem in her drama. Beyond what Noe calls Glaspell's "regional drama" (*Trifles*, *Inheritors*, *The Outside*, and *The Comic Artist*), Glaspell also makes use of geographical isolation in other of her plays with similar purposes. This section expands Noe's point on regional isolation, explaining other geographical metaphors of isolation in plays other than the four ones Noe mentions. This section also provides an analysis of the climatic conditions of these areas, as Glaspell presents them, since Glaspell also makes of weather conditions a dramatic device to portray isolation.

The impact of isolation for the construction of geopathic homes and characters is already evident in Glaspell's *Trifles*. I share Marcia Noe's standpoint that one of the themes of this play is "the effect of the Midwestern environment upon those individuals who attempt to settle and tame the Iowa prairie" (Noe 1983: 34)<sup>1</sup>. In her analysis of the setting of Susan Glaspell's *A Jury of her Peers*, the short story version of *Trifles*, Elaine Hedges concludes that the story

refers to the prairie and plains country that stretches across Iowa into Nebraska- a country of open, level or rolling land, and few trees, which generations of pioneers encountered during successive waves of settlement throughout the nineteenth century. (1995: 52)

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<sup>1</sup> Victoria Aarons in her article "A Community of Women: Surviving Marriage in the Wilderness" makes a similar point referring to "A Jury of her Peers": "[the female characters] are depicted in a constant struggle with loneliness and hardship [...] on the prairies" (1986: 3, emphasis mine).



Within this isolated region, the very location of the Wrights' farm is even more isolated given that "it is down in a hollow and you don't see the road. I dunno what it is, but it's a lonesome place and always was" (42), as Mrs. Hale describes it. Susan Koprince highlights the dichotomy existing between the isolation of the farm and community as she says that "the desolate farmhouse in *Trifles* becomes symbolic of the protagonist's repression and alienation" (2006: 68), that is, Minnie's exclusion from the community is heavily given by the spatial isolation of the place she inhabits. Indeed, in an undated typewritten draft of *Trifles*,<sup>2</sup> Glaspell had made this point clearer by making Mr. Hale say: "She was always nice when anybody came in – poor thing, she used to seem grateful" (3) verbally enhancing Minnie's isolation as Mr. Hale recalls how grateful Minnie looked when someone dropped by.

Glaspell also makes use of this landscape of isolation in other plays set in the Midwest. *Inheritors* opens in "*the Mortons' farmhouse in the Middle West – on the rolling prairie just back from the Mississippi*" (104). The windows open "*out on a generous land*" (104). Grandmother Morton describes how "houses are sparse" (107) and how they were alone in the area but for the Owens, "ten miles down the river" (105). It must be noted, however, that although in the first act Glaspell recreates in spatial terms a feeling of isolation similar to that perceived in *Trifles*, in *Inheritors* this feeling is less acute, probably because what Glaspell intended in this play was to celebrate pioneer life and to use to some extent the values of that time as a model to follow. The subsequent acts, taking place 41 years later, still show the Mortons' farm as an isolated place, alien to the industrialisation of the area:

FEJEVARY: You can see the old Morton place off on that first little hill. (*pointing left*) The first rise beyond the valley.

SENATOR: The long low house?

FEJEVARY: That's it. You see, the town for the most part swung around the other side of the hill, so the Morton place is still a farm. (123)

Morton College in Acts II and III is located "up on the hill" in the middle of cornfields, marking a symbolic relationship between its physical isolation and the isolationist

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<sup>2</sup> "Trifles," typewritten draft, undated. Susan Glaspell Papers, Berg Collection, New York Public Library.

policy characters such as Senator Lewis and Horace Fejevary defend.<sup>3</sup> Thus, while as seen in the previous chapter, Morton College was meant to bring communality to the area, at the present time isolationism reigns inside, as Glaspell symbolises with this location.

The Stanhopes' house of *Alison's House* is also apart from town. The stage direction describes it as follows,

*SCENE: The library of the old Stanhope homestead in Iowa, on the Mississippi, where MISS AGATHA STANHOPE still lives. There is a river village near-by, and the small city where the other Stanhopes now live is about ten miles up the river. (653)*

Moreover, Glaspell uses nature to suggest isolation in this place. The river and the vast vegetation around the house help to suffocate it and keep it apart from civilisation, also marking a spatial hindrance for human communality with those outside the estate.

Significantly, Glaspell's plays set in New England also share this device of isolated location. The plays set on Cape Cod represent lonely places. The old life-saving station of *The Outside* is "an empty house, a buried house, you might say, off here on the outside shore – way across the sand from man or beast" (51). It is exactly "*located on the outside shore of Cape Cod, at the point, near the tip of the Cape, where it makes the final curve which forms the Provincetown Harbor*" (48). Precisely, Mrs. Patrick and Allie chose this isolated place to live in, since this isolation guaranteed the abjection from the community, symbolised in the town of Provincetown, that they want to maintain. Borrowing McBride's words, it could be said that these women isolate themselves because of the "artificial glossing over loss and fear" in the case of Allie, and regarding Mrs. Patrick, "because of the pain and humiliation of abandonment" she faces as she has been denied her role of widow, bearing instead the stigma of the abandoned woman (2006: 167). Similarly, in *The Comic Artist* several characters acknowledge the isolated location of Eleanor and Stephen's house. Luella considers the house as a "no place": "the road seems to go to no place at all" (10), and "(*she says in comment on the lonely house*) [...] My God!" (12). Moreover, Luella and Nina refer

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<sup>3</sup> This significance of the location of Morton College up on the hill has already been analysed in Chapter 3, pp. 110- 113, 122.

several times to the location of the house as “Way out here” (26, 67). Karl also emphasises the isolation of this place when he says:

KARL: This is the kind of place I'd like. It would be lonely for Nina, though. (*Cheerfully.*) In New York I'll think of you having this good light and space, and this heavenly quiet. (47)

Interestingly, through Karl's words, Glaspell suggests that place in itself is not the only source for victimage of location. That is to say, the isolating conditions of Eleanor and Stephen's house would not be a problem for Karl; on the contrary, he would enjoy its quietness. For his wife Nina, however, this place would be a problem. In like manner, Stephen, who seemed to be glad with his house at the beginning of the play, also sees its isolating condition. He says to his wife: “We've been here in isolation too long” (76). Probably, the fact that Eleanor and Stephen had lived in isolation for a long time predisposes the tragic confrontation that takes place when the community, embodied in Luella and Nina, arrive at this place, turning it upside down, as suggested in the previous chapter. I agree with Kristina Hinz-Bode's belief that “Glaspell shows that Eleanor – like so many other figures who despair of human contact in her works – does long for a feeling of connection and understating” (2006b: 242). Eleanor's hospitality towards Luella, when she does not even know who this woman is, suggests Eleanor's wish to be part of the community. It could be said that Eleanor cannot stand the bad side of the community that Luella and, above all, Nina represent; while Stephen recalls and longs for the place in the community he once had, regardless of positive or negative matters.

The house setting in *Bernice* is also apart from civilisation. It is located in an unnamed New England town, two hours from Boston. It is “in the country” (159), and “up on a hill”, determining factors for isolation. As Laura points out, “It's a pity you couldn't get a doctor. That's the worst part of living way up here by one's self” (180). As the Stanhopes' place in *Alison's House*, the house in *Bernice* is also surrounded by nature, making it more inaccessible to humans. Bernice's house is amidst woods: there are two walls “opening almost the entire wall to the October woods” (159). I agree to some extent with Jackie Czerepinski's belief that, “The home is isolated, difficult to get but well worth the trip, just as Bernice was ‘off by herself’ – beyond the understanding of most” (1995: 146- 147). Certainly, the isolation of the house stands for the quality of

Bernice as an isolated and difficult-to-understand character. Nonetheless, Czerepinski's appreciation that the house "is well worth the trip" cannot be left uncontested. One of the most interesting points for the study of geopathology in this play precisely focuses on the matter of isolation. Though it has been pointed out that Bernice lived "content in isolation" (Hinz-Bode 2006b: 113), this cannot be taken for granted, since it is more probably that Bernice, indeed, did not live content in isolation. Bernice's Father at one point thinks about his daughter's detachment: "I think it wasn't that she – wanted it that way" (223), and her maid suggests that Bernice's alleged happiness was fake: "If all those years [...] there was something she hid, and if she seemed to feel – what she didn't feel. She did it well, didn't she?" (216- 217). The two characters who lived with Bernice have serious doubts about her happiness in isolation. Moreover, the isolated and isolating feature of Bernice's house also contributed to her death. As Laura said above, the fact that the house is so apart that the doctor could not reach it in time contributed to Bernice's demise.

The great extent to which the isolation of this place affected Bernice is evidenced also in "Faint Trails," the unpublished short-story version of the play. In this short story, Margaret describes the area surrounding Bernice's house by repeatedly using the term "stillness": "It was that you felt in her a strange stillness like the stillness of that place – the things in her you knew you did not have rose up and had Bernice" (4). Indeed, "that place created [stillness] in Bernice" (4). And stillness, I believe, is not a positive feature for someone everybody tries to see as a happy and lively person. It seems, therefore, that Bernice was quite "dead" before actually passing away. As Hinz-Bode claims, in Bernice Glaspell constructs a character who, though living in "isolated calm," this is not what she really wants for herself (2006b: 242).<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, throughout the play the physical isolation of Bernice's house is experienced negatively by the other characters, since they feel the place even more isolated and isolating now that Bernice is gone.

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<sup>4</sup> Hinz-Bode provides two different points of views regarding *Bernice* in *Susan Glaspell and the Anxiety of Expression*. While in the chapter dealing exclusively with this play, she concentrates upon the idea that Bernice lived "content in her isolation" (2006b: 113), when in Chapter 11 Hinz-Bode compares Bernice to Eleanor in *The Comic Artist* she says: "in the character of Eleanor in *The Comic Artist* recalls the image that Glaspell had evoked eight years earlier of the absent protagonist in Bernice – and through the later play's onstage character the suspicion is strengthened that a life in isolated calm and superiority is not what these 'aloof' women really want for themselves" (2006b: 242). Thus, at this point Hinz-Bode suggests that Bernice did not want this isolation, and consequently, the possibility that she was "content" does not seem feasible.

In dramatic geopathology hard climatic conditions add to isolated fictional places to present a location even more isolated. On the whole, it could be argued that as far as the weather is concerned, Glaspell shows a predilection for autumn and winter scenes. *Inheritors* (Acts II, III and IV) and *Bernice* take place in October and *Alison's House* in December. Since Mrs. Patrick wears a coat and scarf (51), *The Outside* also takes place in a cold season. And so does *The Comic Artist*, taking into account the outside "September hills" (13), the characters' costume, the mist and the wind (56). It is not a matter of coincidence that Glaspell's plays where the tone is more dramatic, and geopathology more easily detectable, show harder climatic conditions, mainly *Trifles* and *The Verge*. *Trifles* begins with the men rushing towards the stove and rubbing their hands, because of the intense coldness. Indeed, we learn that "it dropped to zero last night" (36). This low temperature is also indicative of the isolation and scarce social life of characters inhabiting this place. As Susan Koprince affirms, "The dreariness of the house is magnified by the wintry setting" (2006: 68). Coldness is dramatically utilised here as an important hindrance to social life, because hard climatic conditions can lead to the isolation of people, as it was the case of Mrs. Wright in *Trifles*. In *The Verge* Glaspell does not describe the geographical location of the house as an isolated one straightforwardly. Because of what the characters say, we know that the house is somewhere in New England. Glaspell provides an isolating atmosphere to this place through the snow piling up against the lower greenhouse and the "stormy wind" (58-59). Maybe the greenhouse is not so difficult to arrive at, as Dr. Emmons, Adelaide and Elizabeth do reach the house, but the snow and wind create an impression that this place is difficult to reach.

Thus, Glaspell constructs physical isolation onstage by using specific geographical locations. Her houses are isolated as they are either in hollows or up on hills. And when they are not located in such high or low places, they seem to be separated from civilisation by natural elements: a river, the sea or trees. Glaspell also uses hard climatic conditions to isolate her fictional homes, presenting them as hardly accessible places. We could say that Glaspell's favourite locations for her plays are the places she indeed lived in: the Midwest, New England and New York. The two former areas out of these three are consistently used in her work to reinforce their image of isolation. Nevertheless, it must be highlighted that Glaspell's dramatic use of geographical isolation does not directly lead to geopathology. As suggested in this

section, Glaspell uses geographical isolation to dramatise the confrontation between the individual, which Glaspell places in extreme cases of isolation, and the community. As Kristina Hinz-Bode claims, this dichotomy is one Glaspell employs frequently as one of life's essentials: "communality [is] both as a prison for the individual" and "a chance to change life for better" (2006b: 229). The following sections of this chapter will help to clarify whether the geopathology attributed to the characters placed in isolation come from their need to defend their isolation and escape communality; or, on the contrary, their urge to embrace the community, thus ending their isolation. The following section focuses on and discusses how these isolated fictional places also exemplify the dichotomy between dramatic representations of home as a prison vs. representations of home as shelter.

#### **4.2 Dramatic Representations of Home as Prison and Shelter**

It could be said that the dramatic representations of home as either prison or shelter respond to the different ways characters understand the figure of home. This geodichotomy seems to be a paradox inherent to American culture: the need to have a shelter that provides security for identity, and the need to move beyond the house, to have an identity as a being free to move. Dichotomist representations of home are closely related to other issues seen earlier, especially to Glaspell's revision of the different aspects of the American Myth of Mobility. For if a geopathic character cannot move freely, surely her/his geopathology will increase if the place s/he is in resembles a prison. And vice versa, if a character constructs a shelter in her/his house, in dramatic geopathology this same character may have to cope with the threat that invaders pose, struggling against those other character that, exerting their right to the Myth of Mobility, want to occupy her/his place. This section focuses on the means Glaspell employs to represent home as either prison or shelter. This section will look at some of the plays where Glaspell blends the ideas of prison and shelter, suggesting dramatic geopathology in the case of characters who seem to cherish the place they live in. A first subsection provides a survey of the many implications that Glaspell's unlocalized offstage prisons have for the study of geopathology. Then it moves to the constructions of fictional places as metaphors of entrapment, and finally, the later section deals with the dramatic representations of home as shelter and their implications to create and understand dramatic geopathology in Susan Glaspell's *oeuvre*.

## 4.2.1 Dramatic Configuration of Home as Prison

### 4.2.1.1 Unlocalized Offstage Prisons in the Study of Dramatic Geopathology

An important device Glaspell employs in some of her plays to suggest a prison-like dimension in the onstage place is relating the onstage to unlocalized offstage fictional prisons. In some of her plays, absent characters are imprisoned paralleling the actual prison that the place seen onstage represents metaphorically for other characters. *Trifles* is the first and most discussed example in this respect. Thus, the way Glaspell constructs a symbolic prison in the Wrights' farm will be briefly discussed. To begin with, Minnie Wright is in an offstage prison, and as Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters interpret her farm, this will be erected as a prison too. A stage property, Minnie's apron, is a pivotal element to draw the connection between the real prison Minnie is in and the way the farm is conceived as a prison:

MRS. PETERS: She said she wanted an apron. Funny thing to want, for there isn't much to get dirty in jail, goodness knows. But I suppose just to make her feel more natural [...] And then her little shawl that always hung behind the door. (40)

Karen Alkalay-Gut believes that this apron is "irrelevant to her prison activities yet essential to her concept of self as practical and protected servant" (1995: 73). However, I side with Elaine Hedges, who claims that the fact that Minnie asks for her apron means that with her apron she will feel in prison as at home:

Minnie's home has become her prison. Minnie has asked Mrs. Peters to bring her an apron to wear in jail, a request the sheriff's wife at first finds 'strange.' But when Mrs. Peters decides that wearing the apron will perhaps make Minnie feel 'more natural,' we can only agree, since in moving from house to jail she has but exchanged one form of imprisonment for another. (1995: 65)

I believe that the matter of the apron has nothing to do with a symbolic representation of Minnie's actual need to feel practical or protected. Glaspell employs the apron to show that for Minnie the shift from her kitchen to the sheriff's house is not a big change, since for her both places are prisons. As Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters agree that the apron will make Minnie feel 'more natural,' more at home in the sheriff's house, they come to understand that Minnie's kitchen was her prison. And since they are in the kitchen all the time, one cannot but wonder if they consider their kitchens their prisons too. Elaine

Hedges has seen Minnie's kitchen as "the limited and limiting space of her female sphere" (1995: 54). But this kitchen does not only represent Minnie's "limited and limiting" space, but also the space of most pioneer women of that time, since all shared the same chores and obligations within the farm, and most of these obligations were geographically located inside the kitchen. Reconsidering that the male characters move freely inside the farm, while the women remain all the time in the kitchen,<sup>5</sup> this stage space makes itself evident as a prison for Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters. Closed doors and windows reinforce this configuration of the Wrights' kitchen as a prison.

Glaspell employs a similar technique in *Inheritors*. Here Glaspell also draws the connection between an unlocalized offstage prison and the prison that home becomes for one of her characters, namely, Madeline. The offstage prison in *Inheritors* is not portrayed as a fair institution where offenders are punished and rehabilitated if possible. On the contrary, the prison Glaspell evokes in *Inheritors* appears as a place of torture and injustice. According to what the characters say, the offstage prison is a place that denies prisoners books (121), which "do[es] need a cleaning up" (133), and which, on the whole, does not follow the principles of the democracy the United States claims to defend:

HOLDEN: And I think a society which permits things go on which I can prove go on in our federal prisons had better stop and take a fresh look at itself. To stand for that and then talk of democracy and idealism – oh, it shows no mentality for one thing. (133)

In *Inheritors* Glaspell helps us imagine the conditions of an American prison at the time. In the same way that Glaspell makes a spatial connection between the offstage prison and the kitchen in *Trifles* through a stage property, Minnie's apron, forcing the audience to read between lines and conclude that the farm is a metaphorical prison, in *Inheritors* she utilises another stage property for similar purposes: the letter Fred Jordan sends to Madeline from jail, telling her about the configuration of the place he is imprisoned within, and which forces the audience to visualise mentally this prison:

MADELINE: He got this letter out to me – written on this scrap of paper. They don't give him paper. (*peering*) Written so fine I can hardly read it. He's in what they call 'the hold', father

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<sup>5</sup> Male characters' mobility in contrast to the female characters' immobility in *Trifles* has been analysed in Chapter 3 pp. 84- 86.



– a punishment cell. (*with difficulty reading it*) It's two and a half feet at one end, three feet at the other, and six feet long. He'd been there ten days when he wrote this. He gets two slices of bread a day; he gets water; that's all he gets. (143)

At this point, it is interesting to suggest the possibility that Glaspell was influenced by a real letter J. H. Collins, a conscientious objector, wrote from jail and sent to *The Masses*<sup>6</sup> in 1917. Writing from Hordcott Camp, Wilton and Schubury, Collins's letter reads

I do not expect I shall be able to write again for some time, because when we are under sentence, we are not allowed to have letters unless they are censored. We are not allowed to read, or to write to friends or to have visitors except when serving time, and we have only half rations. I can assure you that the life of a conscientious objector is almost unbearable. (1917: 30)

Collins's words seem to reverberate in what Madeline says after reading Fred Jordan's letter from prison. Fred Jordan's account parallels Collins's "unbearable" life under sentence, with limited paper, censored reading, and scarce food.<sup>7</sup>

At the same time that the offstage prison helps suggest that the onstage places, Morton farm and Morton College, are geopathic, Glaspell is here displaying a brave political commitment to denounce the problem of place in American prisons, not only because of the bad state and inhuman conditions of these buildings, but also because of the reasons why people were incarcerated at that time. Fred Jordan's and the Hindu students' incarcerations in *Inheritors* respond to America's problem with place. Hindu students are in jail because of American xenophobia and isolationist policy after World War I, revealing that in America there is no place for everybody, a geomythology that Glaspell clearly attacks in this play, as seen in Chapter 3 of this thesis. And Fred Jordan is imprisoned under the Espionage Act and the Sedition Act, passed by Congress in

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<sup>6</sup> It is very probable that Glaspell had read this letter, given that *The Masses* was the New York-based journal which most of the Greenwich Village radicals participated in. Several of Glaspell's acquaintances and friends used to write for it. Max Eastman was its editor, and Floyd Dell and Jack Reed were among its regulars.

<sup>7</sup> Recently Linda Ben-Zvi has suggested other models for Fred Jordan. Ben-Zvi comments on the case of Fred Robinson, suggesting that this conscientious objector is behind Glaspell's character because of the name Fred. Ben-Zvi also suggests the well-known case of Philip Grosser, who spent thirty-five years in Alcatraz, "where he was often chained to his cell door and kept in solitary confinement in the hole for long periods of time" (2006: 289).

1917 and 1918,<sup>8</sup> respectively, which “forbade any expression of contempt for the government, Constitution, flag, or military uniform” (Wainscott 1997: 12). Glaspell shows that America, as anywhere else, is a place where governmental rules, either good or bad, have to be respected. Otherwise, imprisonment awaits dissenters. Besides, through Fred Jordan’s incarceration Glaspell also underlines that America, due to its government, is a very vengeful place. As Ben-Zvi notes, solitary confinement and enchainment to cell doors in the 1920s were seen “as signs of continued vengeance, since the United States, unlike its allies, had not pardoned objectors” (2006: 289). Moreover, as Ronald Wainscott points out, this was the time of the Red Scare. In answer to the Spartican Revolt in Berlin, the Russian Revolution, and the 1920 bombings in Wall Street, the Attorney General of the United States, A. Mitchell Palmer, together with Labor Secretary William B. Wilson, launched the Red Scare,

which resulted in summary deportations, incarcerations, property seizure and destruction, beatings, castrations, lynchings, and murders of foreign nationals and such suspected troublemakers known as Communists, socialist organizers, union leaders, and real or imagined anarchists. (1997: 164)

On the whole, although free speech was a constitutional right, it became a dangerous challenge to the government. In *Inheritors*, one of the problems Madeline and Fred Jordan have with place is that they cannot speak freely where they are. Fred was thought an anarchist for defining himself as a conscientious objector, and thus was imprisoned. And when Madeline denounces the unfairness of the Hindu students’ imprisonment, she is warned “Do you know that in America today there are women in our prisons for saying no more than you’ve said here to me?” (141). Moreover, besides her final movement towards prison at the end of the play, Madeline is sent to prison twice for defending the Hindu students. It could be said that one of the main problems with place Glaspell wants to emphasise in this play is the prison-like atmosphere in Morton College and the Morton farm, given that the idea of prison appears here as a powerful symbolic and physical presence through its repetition.

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<sup>8</sup> It must be noted that, as Linda Ben-Zvi clarifies, the Espionage and Seditions Acts had been revoked by the time *Inheritors* opened in 1921, but they were still in effect in 1919, when Glaspell was writing this play. See Ben-Zvi 2006: 288.

Glaspell employs this device mainly in *Trifles* and *Inheritors*, as this section analyses in depth, however, I would like to point out, very briefly, two other plays where Glaspell also establishes the connection between characters who are in prison and female characters who have to struggle to escape from other kinds of prisons. Margaret in *Bernice* works “trying to get out of prison all those people who are imprisoned for ideas” (187). Margaret, as will be seen later, is the modern New Woman who rejects traditional and imprisoning concepts such as family, marriage and home. Similarly, in *Chains of Dew* there is one John Maxwell “in prison for writing what he saw as the truth about life” (I, 27). Maxwell’s imprisonment will reverberate through Dotty’s and Mother’s metaphorical imprisonment in her house and the difficulties they will face to speak freely about birth control. The following section focuses on Glaspell’s depictions of homes as prisons in some of her plays, as well as on other metaphors of entrapment that suggest Glaspell’s characters’ problems with place.

#### **4.2.1.2 Metaphors of Entrapment in the Dramatic Configuration of Home**

It must be noted that the representation of home as prison has a long tradition in American literature. As Susan Koprince has pointed out, Norris’s *McTeague* and Theodore Dreiser’s *Sister Carrie* had already configured homes as “metaphors of entrapment, pointing to the destructive force of environment and to the inability of human beings to control their fates” (2006: 75). Moreover, as these metaphors of entrapment suggest “the destructive force of environment,” it could be said that in some cases the problem a character has with place is inherent to a great extent to that place, since it is the environment which carries those negative features that seclude and affect a character. Nevertheless, the degree to which Glaspell employs these metaphors of entrapment to mean the inability of her characters to control their lives must be questioned, since, as the final chapter of this thesis argues, in some of her plays Glaspell reverses these prison images, allowing her characters to take responsibility over their own fates.

Gilbert and Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) also acknowledge the core role of “images of enclosure” in women’s literary tradition (1979: xi). Susan Glaspell adheres to this tradition, for in many of her plays she turns home into

metaphors of entrapment, looking more like a prison than a safe haven. In her article “Glaspell’s Rhetoric of the Female Artist,” Karen H. Gardiner claims that,

a key rhetorical strategy in Glaspell’s work [is] her use of metaphors of enclosure and entrapment, walls and chains, and her characters’ reactions to them – from acquiescence to resistance to defiance – in their attempts to reach “Out There,” a space of their own beyond the borders of art. (2006: 184)

Here Gardiner points out some of the features that will be found in Glaspell’s configuration of homes as prisons, namely walls and chains. This subsection will focus on Glaspell’s creation of metaphorical prisons through walls and chains, as Gardiner proposes, but other images will appear consistently: such as the cell, the closet, the cage, the caged bird, closed doors and windows, as well as some of Glaspell’s characters’ allusions to stories or poems which include images of seclusion. As implied here, Glaspell constructs both verbal and physical metaphors of entrapment to show home as prison, and both are equally important. To present home as a prison Glaspell employs different devices, through what the audience can see onstage, through the relationship between characters and place, and through what characters say about these places. Unlike Gardiner’s focus, this subsection shows that Glaspell’s usage of metaphors of entrapment is not restricted to state the case of female artists who are socially oppressed, but to any of Glaspell’s characters, artists or not, who experience a problem with the place s/he inhabits expressed through metaphorical imprisonment.

In the previous section, I have pointed out how deeply Madeline in *Inheritors* was affected by Fred Jordan’s imprisonment. While in the previous section I concentrated upon prison as an offstage reality, now I will show how Glaspell underlines the symbolic connection between prison and farm by making Madeline construct a metaphorical prison onstage, in front of the audience’s eyes. It could be said that the most powerful moment in this play happens when Madeline reproduces at the farm Fred Jordan’s prison cell:

*She tries to look out, but cannot; sits very still, seeing what is pain to see. Rises, goes to the corner closet, the same one from which SILAS MORTON took the deed to the hill. She gets a yard stick, looks in a box and finds a piece of chalk. On the floor she marks off FRED JORDAN’s cell. Slowly, at the end left unchalked, as for a door, she goes in. Her hand goes up*

*as against a wall; looks at the other hand, sees it is out too far, brings it in, giving herself the width of the cell. Walks its length, halts, looks up. [...] In the moment she stands there, she is in that cell; she is all the people who are in those cells. (143- 144)*

As Christine Dymkowski has observed,

Glaspell makes the absent Fred Jordan the center of our attention, without having him appear on stage. The audience is forced to imagine the experience of this political prisoner through Madeline's imagining of it; indeed, because the focus is on Madeline's attempt to experience Fred Jordan's confinement, the audience's mental and emotional engagement is greater than it would have been if Jordan were actually shown on stage in his cell. (1988: 99- 100)

Though Dymkowski is right about the emotional impact on the audience, I believe that Madeline's imagination and concern go further than his friend's cell. The cell is not merely Fred's, but "all the people's." As Madeline reflects upon all those prisoners, she does not feel entitled to look out through the window. As Ben-Zvi notes, when Madeline draws this cell "is a powerful and convincing moment, the political made personal, a visual image that is moving because of its starkness" (2006: 291). Reflecting upon this political issue made personal, the reasons why Madeline cannot look through the window seem at least twofold. On the one hand, as those prisoners do not have a window to look through, she wants to identify with them and thus she denies herself this privilege. "I used to tramp with Fred Jordan. This is where he is now. (*stepping inside the cell*) He doesn't even see out," says Madeline (150). On the other hand, it might be possible that Madeline feels so ashamed of what many Americans are doing, of their extreme isolationist and nationalistic policy, that she cannot look on the American land with the same eyes she did before. She cannot enjoy her country as she did before, not after realising what is happening to other people who are not as lucky as she is, to those who dissent against the government and who do not enjoy the freedom she has.

Visually, the image of the prison goes beyond the cell drawn on the floor and metaphorically occupies the whole farm in the following scene:

MADELINE: Detachment. (*pause*) This is one thing they do at this place. (*she moves to the open door*) Chain them up to the bars – just like this. (*in the doorway where her two grandfathers once pledged faith with the dreams of a million years, she raises clasped hands as high as they will go*) Eight hours a day – day after day. Just hold your arms up like this one hour

then sit down and think about – (*as if tortured by all those who have been so tortured, her body begins to give with sobs, arms drop, the last word is a sob*) detachment. (153)

As Madeline has come to understand that her problem with place in America is that this is an ideological prison, the representation of what happens inside cells does not limit itself to the chalk cell she had drawn before. It could be said that Madeline becomes here the Every(wo)man of expressionistic theatre. It must be noted that this scene contains two of the basic elements in an expressionistic play: the *Schrei* and the Christ image.<sup>9</sup> Madeline's raised arms recalls Christ on the cross, and the repetition of the word "Detachment" is Madeline's *Schrei*. Nevertheless, Madeline's scream is silenced and killed by a sob because she is exhausted from repeating the tortures "Every(wo)man" experiences. The power of place seems to overcome her. She will need her ancestors' help to solve this problem, as discussed in the final chapter of this thesis.

Other plays where Glaspell builds prison-like homes, such as *Chains of Dew*, *Alison's House*, and *Trifles* are not as political as *Inheritors* in terms of Glaspell's criticism of America, its immigration policy, its jingoism, and its xenophobia, but they focus more explicitly on the idea of home as a metaphorical prison for some of the characters inhabiting it in terms of their self-expression. That is, these imprisoned characters are ill-affected by the power of an enclosing location that does not allow their identity to change or even show, at the same time that these characters seem to have a restricted access to the Myth of Mobility, being thus forced to stay in a home that represses and constraints them. Very early in *Chains of Dew*, Seymore opens up the topic of his home as a prison, as he makes the general comment that when "You're in a certain place. Holding it down – and up. Too many things fall if you let go" (I, 23). Through Seymore, Glaspell makes home look like a prison because this is a place that keeps one tied to it because it stands for family obligations. Moreover, according to Seymore, it is not only his home that looks like a prison but also the whole geographical area of the American Midwest:

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<sup>9</sup> For more information about expressionistic theatre, and more specifically about the *Schrei* and the Christ image see for instance Innes 2001: 40, 46.

SEYMORE: Middle West. Not by free people will the world be set free. But by people who've grown good and sore in the silent middle west.

O'BRIEN: It is a dreadful place?

SEYMORE: (*With a shiver*) We'll not speak of it. You see – having lived in the middle west, I want everybody to be free. (*Joking – yet letting the joke plead his case*) How can I breathe when I know dead life still chokes my middle western brother? What's the use of a few people being free if that simply lets them know the fix the others are in? I want it for everybody. I have a feeling the renaissance will come – all at once – and for everybody. (I, 27)

To enhance his own feeling of geopathology towards his home, Seymore presents his New York friends with a picture of the area where he lives that is equally geopathic. According to him, nobody is free in the Midwest. Through this character, it seems that geopathology is nowhere more evident than in the Midwest, a place where everybody is fixed, chained to duties. Glaspell underlines Seymore's feeling of geopathology by making him a free character when he is in New York, free of the chains that keep him tied to his home. When he is in New York, he is "a man let out of prison," released from "bondage" (I, 32). But as the play develops, the audience becomes more and more aware of how fake Seymore's bondage, as his geopathology, is. I agree with J. Ellen Gainor's point that:

Seymore has constructed a shell of self-sacrifice into which he retreats whenever his actions or attitudes are challenged. By making others feel guilty for all he is theoretically doing for them, all he has ostensibly sacrificed on their behalf, he makes them behold to him, ensuring the perpetuation of the only environment in which he can function. (2001: 185)

That is, although Seymore presents his home as a prison, by the end of the play it is clear that this is a prison he likes and that he alone eagerly struggles to maintain. In this regard, the title of the play is worth analysing. Seymore's *chains*, his metaphor of his social and family obligations, which deter him from living the free and satisfying life he would like to lead as a full-time poet, "are as ephemeral as dew" (Gainor 2001: 185). Playing with the phonetic similarity between "dew" and "due," Glaspell's title already makes us question whether Seymore's chains to his family, which Leon nicely labels "chains of affection" (III, 24), are actual obligations or just weak ties Seymore has invented himself to continue being the martyr of the family. I agree with Kristina Hinz-Bode's statement that Seymore "is a conceited prig who casts his family and social

circles in the role of ‘burden’ so that he can sustain the theme of ‘longing for freedom’ which is the essence of his poetry” (2006a: 213); and I would add that this burden is at least the force that sets in motion his creativity, good or bad. Thus, it could be said that what Glaspell merges here is the dichotomy between the representation of home as prison or shelter. As it becomes evident that Seymore’s home is not his prison, one cannot but assert that this is, actually and contrary to what he actually says, his shelter. As he says that it is his prison-house that prevents him from being a good and free poet, his house is his shelter to justify that he is not the great poet he claims he could be. Importantly, Seymore’s fake geopathology also reveals that as he maintains his home as a prison, this will be a prison for his family, the ones that are forced to “behold to him.” As Gardiner claims, Dotty (Diantha)

is ‘his chain of affection,’ the ‘chain of dew’ that binds him; she is the burden he must bear, the source of the suffering he must endure if he is to write good poems. Conversely, Seymore is also the chain that binds Diantha. He has encouraged her to be less than she can so that when he visits New York he can complain about – and be pitied for – his stifling life back in the heartland. (2006: 194)

And Seymore’s Mother is also his prisoner. Both Dotty and Mother are chained to the traditional roles Seymore wants for them,<sup>10</sup> as they feel morally obliged to support Seymore’s belief that he is the cornerstone of the house.

Agatha in *Alison’s House* is another character that has configured her home as a prison. Indeed, she has named herself the guardian of this prison-house, as she repeatedly implies with her words: “I won’t have people looking through Alison’s room. I’ve guarded it for eighteen years” (657); “That’s why I didn’t want to move. Stirring it all up! I wish they’d let Alison alone” (658); “Me leave this house – while it is still this house? I shall be the last to step from the door” (659); and “Leaving things for every one else to pry into – looking – prying” (659). Agatha’s obsession with being the guardian of the house, and of Alison’s secret poems, makes her a geopathic character. The rest of the family, although unaware of the existence of these poems, realises Agatha’s problem with the house, and this is the reason why they are moving, that is, to get Agatha out of this place:

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<sup>10</sup> This point is developed later on; see Chapter 5.3, pp. 218- 220.



STANHOPE: Agatha cannot be left here. Her heart's feeble, and her mind – not what it was. If the place remained, she'd come back here. (670)

Stanhope understands that staying in this house is bad for Agatha's health. Here Glaspell shows again that the geodichotomy of home as prison and home as shelter can blend. Agatha's eagerness to protect the house, to keep its status of shelter, has turned into the source of her pathology: the house has become a prison too. For as she has played the role of Alison's guard during and after Alison's life, Agatha has also developed a role of prisoner herself. At one point Agatha wonders, "I'm no *prisoner*, am I? Why should I stay up in my room if I don't want to?" (678, emphasis mine). One of Agatha's main problems with place is that she cannot recognise that she has a problem with it. As she moves around the house, erecting herself as "the guardian," she cannot see that she is a prisoner. The other characters acknowledge that she has never left the house. That is, Agatha thinks she is sheltered, when indeed she is imprisoned.

Glaspell complicates this issue of the status of the house as prison and shelter, and strongly presents Agatha as a geopathic character, in the solution Agatha finds to remain Alison's eternal keeper: burning the house down. After spending some time packing the china set with straw, "*AGATHA begins to unpack the tea set. Looks around to see that her brother is not watching her. Works carefully, to make no noise. Puts the pieces at the side of her chair, where the others will not see. Presses the straw back in the basket*" (659). At first sight, Agatha resembles the mythical Penelope. As she does not want to leave the house, her undoing her work seems a deliberate artifice to gain time and delay her moving out. But when she leaves the library room with the basket and does not pause when Stanhope asks her (660), a terrible premonition arises. Jennie's offstage cry "Everybody – quick – the house – burning!" (663) clarifies what Agatha was doing with the straw. Agatha returns then to the room. She is described as a pathological character. She is "*white, rigid,*" entering the room "*in a curious, fixed state*" (663). She confidently states her wish to see the house burnt down, "Burning. All burning. All at once. [...] I am not afraid – now" (663).

The pathological status of Agatha is evidenced by her attempt to demolish the whole house, carelessly of the damages she might cause to her family and herself. The house is Agatha's problem because it contains Alison's secret poems. "I'll keep her

from the world – I'll keep the world from getting her – if it kills me – and kills you all!" cries Agatha (659). Therefore, as news comes that the fire has been put out, Agatha cannot but express "(with horror) They have put the fire out!" (663), and "What else could I do? I tried – and tried. Burn them? All by themselves? (*In a whisper*) It was – too lonely (*She falls back*)" (663). Under Agatha's view, Alison's poems made a unity with the house. Trying to separate these poems from the house was a useless solution. Alison's poems are prisoners of the house as much as Agatha is.

It could be argued that in as much as Agatha is the guardian of Alison's poems, making them prisoners of the house, the imprisoned poems are a posthumous extension of the seclusion Alison endured all her life. I agree with Karen H. Gardiner's idea that Alison "was walled in by the conventionality of her family during her life. After her death, her poetry was also walled in, hidden away in a closet, still carefully guarded by sister Agatha" (2006: 196). Elsa, the character who had already beaten the configuration of home as prison with her physical departure, breaking away from family and society ties, makes this point clear when she refers to Agatha in the following terms: "And guarded her, her whole life through" (682). The fact that "her" can refer both to Agatha and Alison brings the interplay of Agatha as guardian and Alison as prisoner their 'whole life through' to the front.

Even before the content of the poems is revealed, when the others characters learn what they had only intuited before, that Alison felt as a prisoner in the house, Alison arises as a geopathic character through her association with what can be considered a commonplace geopathic location in women's literature: the closet, the symbolic location where Agatha starts the fire. The closet is, indeed, a very interesting element of analysis for the geopathic consideration of Alison's bedroom. Before confronting this closet in Act III, Glaspell has made several references throughout the play to the fact that Alison's room has a closet, what implies that the physicality of this closet does not answer to a mere functional or realistic dimension. Glaspell erects the closet within the room in Alison's house as a prison within the prison of the room within the prison of the house. This closet is first mentioned in Act I, as Agatha decides to start the fire in this place, and in Act III the audience gets to see the small door leading into the closet at stage right. In this manner, the physicality of this small door

throughout the final act, when Alison is recognised as a trapped character, grants this closet a greater importance.

The value of the closet for the dramatic analysis of geopathology gains even more importance when one thinks about the woman writer to whom the image of the closet owes relevance in literature: Emily Dickinson. As has been pointed out, at the time of *Alison's House* opening, it was publicly assumed, and indeed used as a means of giving popularity to the play, that Glaspell's newest play was a recreation of Emily Dickinson's life.<sup>11</sup> In the scarce critical attention that this play has gathered, most scholars actually focus on the parallels that can be found between Emily Dickinson and her fictional Glaspellian recreation, Alison Stanhope. Katherine Rodier's "Glaspell and Dickinson: Surveying the Premises of *Alison's House*" (1995) is a significant seminal work in this concern. After providing an insightful account of the contemporary interest in Dickinson's work for the centenary of her birth in 1930, as well as the documentary and live sources Glaspell might have used as the basis for her play, Rodier draws many parallels between Alison and Dickinson. Rodier focuses on the similitude regarding Alison's and Dickinson's physical description, their way of being, what they wrote (Rodier gives examples from Dickinson's poems that reverberate throughout *Alison's House*), and the pivotal fact that both renounced an "illicit love" for the sake of their family's names. J. Ellen Gainor also elaborates on this idea, praising *Alison's House* as "a truthfully [...] Dickinson biography" (2001: 222), which helped to enlarge the Dickinson legend and, ironically, advanced many issues of Dickinson's life and poems that would only be revealed in later biographies and editions of her secret poems. Gainor even provides an accurate chart linking actual people surrounding Emily Dickinson to the characters in *Alison's House*.

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<sup>11</sup> Karen Laughlin affirms that for *Alison's House*'s opening at Eva Le Gallienne's Civic Repertory Theatre, "it appears that Le Gallienne carefully promoted the play on the basis of the Alison-Dickinson link" (1995: 219). J. Ellen Gainor, going deeper into the first reviews the play received, claims that "Almost every review of the play featured a comment about the drama being based on Dickinson's life. Otis Chatfield-Taylor, writing in the *Outlook and Independent*, provides some tantalizing details: '[*Alison's House*] purports to deal, rumors assiduously circulated by Miss Le Gallienne's press department and others have it, with the effects on Emily Dickinson's family of discovery, years after her death, of some of her poems previously unknown [in 'The Theatre' 31 Dec. 1930, 711 ].' Richard Dana Skinner alludes to the same 'rumor' [in 'The Play.' *Commonweal*, 30. Mar 1927, 582-583], whereas Robert Littell flatly states, 'For the Alison Stanhope of Susan Glaspell's play read Emily Dickinson'[in 'The New Play.' *World*, 2 Dec. 1930, 11] " (2001: 223- 224).

Given the works carried out by scholars such as Rodier and Gainor it is surprising that the closet within Alison's room has never been given the value it deserves, since this closet establishes a powerful visual link between Glaspell's poet and Dickinson. It could be said that Alison's closet is an explicit reference to Dickinson's poem 613 (written circa 1862), in which the famous line "They put me in the closet" visualises the agoraphobic imagination of the trapped woman writer, and confirms closets as one of the main images within the female gothic of domestic terror:<sup>12</sup>

They shut me up in prose –  
As when a little Girl  
They put me in the Closet –  
Because they liked me 'still' –

Still! Could themselves have peeped –  
And seen my Brain – go round –  
They might as wise have lodged a Bird  
For Treason – in the Pound –

Himself has but to will  
And easy as a Star  
Abolish his Captivity –  
And laugh – No more have I – <sup>13</sup>

Though it cannot be assured that Glaspell had indeed read this poem, this possibility is, however, quite probable. Glaspell documented herself seriously to write this play, so if she had the chance to get that book of Dickinson's latest released poems, she probably got a copy. But even if Glaspell did not have a look at this published poem herself, she could have listened to it in several ways. Mary Heaton Vorse, who grew up in Amherst, where the Dickinsons lived, became one of Glaspell's main sources of inspiration for *Alison's House*. Vorse provided Glaspell with many details about the Dickinsons' family legend, and all the gossip going around in Amherst, as well as about Emily

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<sup>12</sup> See for instance Piñero 1999 for more information about images of domestic terror in the female gothic.

<sup>13</sup> Poem 613 was first published in *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Centenary Edition* (1930), the same year that *Alison's House* opened on 1<sup>st</sup> December.

Dickinson's poems.<sup>14</sup> Barbara Ozieblo also calls attention to the fact that Vorse had indeed been interviewed by Genevieve Taggard, who at that time was writing her biography of Dickinson.<sup>15</sup> It might be the case that Vorse had told Taggard details about the Dickinsons in exchange for some of Emily's secret poems. Linda Ben-Zvi acknowledges that even though Taggard's book was published after Glaspell had completed the play, she might have read the manuscript or talked to Taggard herself, since Taggard was a well-known figure in Greenwich Village.<sup>16</sup> It is also possible that Glaspell had heard about the poem 613 in one of the meetings of the New York clubs she attended. The Liberal Club and Heterodoxy, as seen in Chapter 1 of this thesis, combined social and political issues with literary discussions, so it might be that Glaspell heard the poem 613 there. Even though Glaspell and Cook were not very attached to Mabel Dodge's salon on Fifth Avenue,<sup>17</sup> Dickinson's poetry could well have been discussed there. Another possibility is that one of Glaspell's poet friends, one of those witnesses of how "Seeing Susan in those days when she was first plunging her mind into Emily Dickinson's story was seeing a creative force at work" (Vorse 1991: 124), could have remembered the poem and told her. Therefore, the means through which Glaspell could have become familiar with the poem are so feasible and open, and the importance she provides to the closet in *Alison's House* is so high, that Glaspell's actual reading of the poem appears more than possible.

The significance of the closet in Dickinson's poem 613 establishes a straightforward link with Alison's poetry and behaviour as a geopathic character. On the one hand, Dickinson builds her poem upon an image of seclusion, the closet, to denounce women writers' enclosure within the literary mode of prose. For centuries, women writers were relegated to the writing of prose, since theatre was too public an event, and poetry was too confessional, the form where the lyrical "I" can be most strongly heard. Dickinson, the poetess, finds her creative wings thwarted by "They." "They" do not want her to write because "they" like her "still." Quite probably, "They"

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<sup>14</sup> For Vorse's possible contribution to *Alison's House* see Gainor 2001: 223.

<sup>15</sup> See Ozieblo 2000: 241.

<sup>16</sup> See Ben-Zvi 2005: 332.

<sup>17</sup> Ozieblo argues that Mabel Dodge "appealed neither Glaspell nor Cook. She seemed too frivolous to them" (2000: 60).

stand for the community, or, in a more feminist reading, for patriarchy, which considered that writing poetry should not be part of female roles.<sup>18</sup> Alison Stanhope, as well as her real model, Emily Dickinson, had most of her poems published posthumously. Moreover, the image of the closet and the fact that “They” want her “still” add to the other issue that brings Dickinson and the dramatic Alison together. As has been pointed out, an “illicit love” was part of the poetess’s legend, and Glaspell copied this affair for her absent protagonist.<sup>19</sup> Resisting their own will to join their lovers, they both, Emily Dickinson and Alison Stanhope, obeyed the rules, and kept “still,” and “in the closet.” As Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar claim, “Emily Dickinson became a madwoman [in the attic] – became [...] both ironically a madwoman (a deliberate impersonation of a madwoman) and truly a madwoman (a helpless agoraphobic, trapped in a room in her father’s house” (1979: 583). The closet, as has been said before about Alison’s house, can be seen as an image of imprisonment within Dickinson’s *oeuvre*.

In the second stanza of poem 613, Dickinson employs another metaphor of entrapment, the “bird” “lodged” “for treason,” that is, for disobeying “their” rules. Significantly, Glaspell, as many other women writers, would employ the image of the caged bird, as in *Trifles* for instance, to stand for trapped women. But in Dickinson’s poem 613 and as happens with Alison’s secret poems, “they” could not prevent these women writers’ minds from taking them to other places, from flying away to “abolish” “Captivity.” The beautiful image of the bird Dickinson constructs reveals imagination, “my Brain,” as the means of overcoming physical entrapment. Dickinson’s and Alison’s imaginations were reflected in their poems to beat their closet-prisons, and this the reason why the closet and the poems have such a pivotal importance in *Alison’s House*. At the same time, this explains why Agatha decides to start the fire here. With her

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<sup>18</sup> In Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *The Yellow Wallpaper*, after the mental breakdown of the woman protagonist, the male characters attempt to turn her into a proper woman again by forbidding any kind of intellectual work, especially writing. As Gilbert and Gubar have pointed out, this was one of the main devices of woman’s rest-cure, invented, obviously, by men (1979: 89- 90).

<sup>19</sup> At the time Glaspell was writing the play, Amherst gossip claimed that Dickinson had fallen in love with a married man, and unable to break the rules of respectability, she chose seclusion to her room. Though more contemporary approaches to Dickinson’s life have seen in Dickinson’s poetry evidence to claim that her “illicit love” was indeed lesbian (see Gainor 2001: 283, n.15), and probably directed towards her sister-in-law, Glaspell kept close to her contemporary gossip and built her play upon the “lesser evil” of both illicit loves, that is, the heterosexual one.

madwoman in the attic's solution, and for the final moment of destruction, Agatha wants to put Alison, metonymically embodied in her poems, again in the closet.

Alison's poems are never read aloud in the play,<sup>20</sup> but Glaspell dramatically suggests the imprisonment this character experienced through other means, apart from the symbolic closet. Alison's room is exactly as she left it, and though the characters at first rejoice thinking about the good moments Alison spent here, some details reveal this place as a problematic one for Alison. Glaspell recreates Alison's entrapment within her room through the stories and memories that the Stanhopes recall about her. At no point in the play do they tell of any memory about Alison that took place outside her room. In the following scene Stanhope, Eben, and Elsa are together in Alison's room:

EBEN: There is a knock at the door. It's me. I am crying. She makes a funny little face. She says – Tell Alison. I tell her Jimmy Miles has knocked over my mud house. She says – You can build a fort, and put him in it. She tells me the story of the bumble bee that got drunk on larkspur and set out to see how drunk you could get in heaven. And what became of her thoughts – the thought interrupted?

ELSA: Oh, it waited for her, and the bumble bee came into it.

EBEN: And that was his heaven.

ELSA: Why not? (*They are both brighter*) Then another knock. No, a pounding with fits – Alison – Alison. Little Elsa! Aunt Agatha won't give me a cookie, because I pulled the cat's tail. She tells me Aunt Agatha can't help being like that, and that the cat would agree with her. And she says – what if I had pulled the tail off, and we laugh; and she writes me a little poem, about a cookie that had no tail. She gives me candy, and stands at the door so that Aunt Agatha can't get in, but God, she says, could come down the chimney. (*They both laugh. Elsa goes over to the table, takes up the portfolio she was about to open when Ann came in. Slowly.*) I don't know what is in this. (683- 684)

In the little stories Alison told her niece and nephew to console them Glaspell employs two images to underline Alison's feeling of entrapment. Firstly, as she tells Eben to build a "sand fort" to put the bully Jimmy in (683), one perceives Alison's mind working on prison images, possibly influenced by her own imprisonment. In Alison's

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<sup>20</sup> One of the problems Susan Glaspell encountered when writing *Alison's House* was that "the Dickinson family refused to allow Susan to use the family name or any of Emily Dickinson's poems in the play. Susan refused to give up her project; she merely changed the setting from Amherst to Iowa and created Alison Stanhope, a Dickinson-like spinster poet who was rumoured to have once loved a married man" (Noe 1983: 59). Emily Dickinson's biographers, Josephine Pollitt and Genevieve Taggard could not quote from Dickinson's poems, either (see Gainor 2001: 224). Glaspell suggests the content of Alison's poems through what the other characters comment on them.

imagination, which probably mirrors in the poems the other characters will later read, people are easily imprisoned. A fragile “sand fort” is enough to keep “the bully Jimmy” trapped. Furthermore, right after telling about a fort, Alison went on to tell a story about a “bumble bee.” In Alison’s mind, this insect is a metaphor of freedom, unlike Alison’s entrapment in her room; the bumble bee can fly free and reach heaven.

Secondly, when Elsa recalls how she sought refuge from Agatha in Alison’s room, this room erects itself as a fort, a shelter. Nevertheless, Elsa recalls how Alison uses the door to block Agatha’s entry, and that her aunt was aware that God “could come down the chimney.” For the geopathic Alison, no room is a shelter. In this manner, it seems as if the burden of being under control, an image Alison constructs here making reference to God, were extremely hard on her.<sup>21</sup> It is also significant that Elsa and Eben recall all these seclusion stories and references just as they are about to discover Alison’s poems. When they read these poems, they realise all the pain Alison went through when she stayed at home instead of eloping with her lover, they regret:

EBEN: (*slowly, as if trying to realize it*). And all of that – went on in this room.

STANHOPE: If I had known it was as much as this – I would not have asked her to stay. [...] In this room I asked her to stay. He was below. He had come for her. [...] At once they seemed to recognize each other. He was for her. She was for him. That was – without question. But he was married. He had children. They parted. But – they were one. I know that now. (687-688)

Alison followed the rules of respectability, and to avoid the kind of shame that would fall upon her family if she had left with her lover, as Elsa did, provoking that shame, she stayed, accepting the prison of the house and to be guarded by Agatha:

AGATHA: Who kept Alison in a prison? What do you mean – a prison? She was where she wanted to be, wasn’t she? [...] I say she does not belong to the world! I say she belongs to us. And I’ll keep her from the world – I’ll keep the world from getting her – if it kills me – and kills you all! (659)

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<sup>21</sup> Katherine Rodier sees in this line a clear parallelism with Dickinson’s God as “Burglar! Banker – Father!” in poem 49, as “Papa above” in poem 61, and as the force of “Heavenly Hurt” in poem 258, a God that “could certainly come down the chimney” (1995: 204- 205).



Agatha answers in this way to Ted's remark that "We can't keep Alison in a prison" (659). As it is discovered in the poems; it is quite clear that Alison was not where she wanted to be, and that the years she spent separated from her lover, confined to the house, constituted a chain of painful days she hid from her family through her games and stories. It is only when they read her poems that they fully recognise that Alison's room was her prison, not her self-chosen shelter. As they admit after reading her poems, Alison's poems are the written proof of Alison's painful experience of the "inside," "all of that went on in this room": "It's here – the story she never told. She has written it, as it was never written before. The love that never died – loneliness that never died – anguish and beauty of her love!" (687). As seen, in *Alison's House*, Glaspell constructs images of seclusion that are interesting for an analysis of dramatic geopathology by interweaving the physical configurations of the house (the isolated house, with a closed room that holds a closet) and metaphors of imprisonment she makes her characters utter.

The metaphorical usage of images of seclusion for dramatic geopathology is perhaps nowhere more obvious than in the symbolic allusions to cages in Susan Glaspell's plays. For instance, in *Close the Book* Glaspell employs the image of the cage to verbalise Jhansi's feeling of entrapment within the Roots' library, her geopathology. "[W]alls stifle me. You come of people who have been walled all their lives. It doesn't cage you. But me – I am a gypsy!" says Jhansi (55, emphasis mine). The cage enters straightforwardly in opposition to Jhansi's alleged ancestors, who "right behind me – all those wanderers, people who were never caught; feel them behind me pushing me away from all this!" (55). The Roots' house is seen by Jhansi as a cage, keeping its inhabitants within the behaviour rules generally and socially accepted and which she strongly rejects. The cage as a metaphor of entrapment is strengthened by its use in conjunction with the physicality of the walls of the Roots' house that "stifle" Jhansi. The walls, elsewhere used as "metaphors of social oppression in general" (Gardiner 2006: 185) and as metaphors of "conventionality" (2006: 196), have a physical dimension not to be forgotten. For walls, besides being metaphors of social control, physically prevent free exit of geopathic characters who cannot move out. Though it is true that Jhansi's geopathology, as in the case of Seymore in *Chains of Dew*, seems fake; for other characters, such as Alison in *Alison's House*, the physicality

of the walls is a boundary as uncrossable as it is their metaphorical allusion to social norms.

In *Trifles* the birdcage is more than a symbolic allusion that helps Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters see Minnie as a trapped character and the Wrights' farm as her prison. For in *Trifles*, the birdcage is a real stage property with a physical presence onstage, as well as the dead canary that the other female characters come to see as a metaphor of the caged Minnie herself. Both the cage and the canary have been extensively analysed as symbols of imprisonment.<sup>22</sup> It could be said that in the same way that in *Alison's House* Glaspell organises images of imprisonment as in a set of Russian nesting dolls (the closet inside the room inside the house), in *Trifles* Glaspell places the cage within the kitchen within the farm. All three are prisons in themselves, and when all three are seen together they contribute to creating a greater sense of entrapment.

Glaspell gives the cage a central role as she makes Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale touch and talk about it, turning this stage property into one of the main devices in the play to understand its dramatic geopathology. Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale examine the cage closely:

MRS. PETERS: Why, look at this door. It's broke. One hinge is pulled apart.

MRS. HALE: (*looking too*) Looks as if someone must have been rough with it. (42)

Regarding this dialogue, many critics believe that both women see in this broken cage the clear evidence of John Wright's roughness. This is, at least, the way Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale see it. For instance, Beverly Smith admits that "Minnie does fit, at least in some respects, the psychological/social pattern of the battered wife" (1982: 179). However, since both Minnie and John are absent characters, it is impossible to ascertain this issue. Moreover, the matter whether it was John who broke the cage, as Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters believe, or not, is also complicated as Minnie is presented as the canary. Mrs. Hale makes the explicit connection between a singing bird, the one that supposedly

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<sup>22</sup> See for instance Alkalay-Gut 1995: 74, Bigsby 1987: 11, Hedges 1995: 59; Makoswsky 1999: 52; Manuel 2000: 61, and Shafer 1997: 40.

inhabited the cage, and which has not been found yet, and the choir girl Minnie was (42, 44). Reconsidering the point that Minnie might be a geopathic character, feeling trapped in the cage-farm, there seems to be a parallelism between wanting to escape from the farm and murdering her husband, and feeling trapped within the farm and breaking the cage. Both the murder and the breaking of the cage are violent acts. In this manner, it could be possible that Minnie broke the birdcage hoping somebody could see it as evidence of her own entrapment and longing for freedom. In the same way that Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters see Minnie's wrong quilt stitches or the messy kitchen as indicative of her pitiful life regarding work, the broken cage could be seen as a sign Minnie leaves in her kitchen on purpose.

Cynthia Sutherland points out that the motif of the caged bird was to become the hallmark of "numerous 'domesticated' women" (1978: 323), and it is indeed a leitmotif for many women writers. Yvonne Shafer, nevertheless, sees the clear influence of Strindberg's *Miss Julie*, who set the pattern of the caged bird already in 1888 (1997: 40). And the influence is quite clear in *Trifles*. *Miss Julie*, a one-act play set in a kitchen, presents a trapped female protagonist, Miss Julie. She has a bird, about which she says: "he's the only creature that loves me" (1972: 111). In the same manner, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters feel that Minnie's canary must have been her only source of joy. When Miss Julie, after having an affair with her servant, Jean, feels impelled to leave the wealthy house of her father, she decides to take her bird, her most precious possession, with her. Jean, in a kind of gory spectacle, chops the bird's neck. In *Trifles* Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters think something similar has happened to Minnie's canary. Witnessing the cruel murder of her pet, Miss Julie angrily shouts to Jean that she would like "to see your blood, and your brains, on a chopping-block! I'd like to see your whole sex swimming in a sea of blood" (1972: 111- 112). Nevertheless, Miss Julie soon abandons this unlady-like idea, as she cannot imagine herself literally chopping Jean's neck. Finally, Miss Julie decides to commit suicide, because "there is no other way out" (1972: 118), thus choosing a more lady-like way of solving her problem. Minnie, as Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters see it, finds a different way out: to give her husband the same end that her canary had had.

The plays discussed in this section serve to show that Glaspell elaborates metaphors of entrapment through the physicality of the places she creates onstage,

through isolated and isolating fictional onstage places, walls, closed doors and windows, and through the images she constructs to reproduce the feeling of entrapment, such as the onstage and the offstage representations of prison cells, and the physical presence or metaphorical allusions to other forms of entrapment, such as the wall, the cage and the caged bird, the closet, and the chains. We have seen briefly that in this study of geopathology in Susan Glaspell's plays, metaphors of entrapment also apply to some cases where characters considered their houses to be shelters. The next section focuses on the geomythology of home as shelter, in an attempt to ascertain whether in Susan Glaspell's construction of geopathic homes the dichotomy between home as prison and home as shelter really works, or whether we could conclude that in her plays, all her fictional onstage places, at some point or another, turn into prisons.

#### **4.2.2 Metaphorical Representations of Home as Shelter**

As suggested earlier, few are the characters in Glaspell's dramaturgy who see their homes as their shelters. It could be said that those characters who endeavour to keep their long-held family identity, embodied in the house they live in, do find a shelter in their house, such as the Roots in *Close the Book*. Characters such as the pioneers in *Inheritors*, who have strongly fought against nature and the Native Americans to tame the land they live now in, also find a shelter in their house. But there is a general feeling that, above all, and with a few exceptions, characters that construct shelters in their houses are not very sympathetic ones. And in some other cases, those characters who construct a shelter to come to terms with place do so only to see their places invaded by other characters or to see how these places eventually become their own prisons. In keeping with the section above about house as prison, those characters conscious of their own entrapment in their houses rarely see their places as shelters. It is the characters around them who insistently claim that homes are shelters. There are, nevertheless, some "imprisoned" characters that still defend their places as if these were shelters. This section focuses on the complex intersection of these issues.

Ira in *Inheritors* is the main instance of the kind of character that can be called "geopathic" due to his insistence on considering the onstage place of his farm to be his fort. He finds that staying at home is the safest means of keeping alive:

IRA: Grown up now – and going off and leaving me alone. You too – the last one. And – what for? (*turning, looking around the room as for those long gone*) There used to be so many in this house. My grandmother. She sat there. (*pointing to the place near the open door*) Fine days like this – in that chair (*points to the rocker*) she'd sit there – tell me stories of the Indians. Father. It wasn't ever lonely when father was. Then Madeline Fejevary – my Madeline came to this house. Through that door – through the field – out of this house. (*bitter silence*) Then Fred – out of this house. Now you. (146)

Ira has witnessed the deaths of all those relatives. And, importantly, he has equated going outside the farm with death, since his wife, Madeline, died when she went to the Johnsons': "Diphtheria they had – the whole of 'em – but *out of this house* she ran – my Madeline, leaving you – her own baby – running as fast as she could through the cornfield after that immigrant woman. She stumbled in the rough field – fell to her knees. That was the last I saw of her" (154, emphasis mine). But his wife is not the only one who found death as she went outside the farm. Ira says about his son Fred:

IRA: Look at your brother! Gone – (*snaps his fingers*) like that. I told him not to go to war. He didn't have to – they'd been glad enough to have him stay here on the farm. But no, - he must – make the world safe for democracy! Well, you see how safe he made it, don't you? Now I'm alone on the farm and he – buried on some Frenchman's farm. (154)

Ira is a victim of place, as he wrongly believes that the farm will protect him from life's unfortunate facts. He blames the deaths of his wife and son on the outside, on their departure from the house. This explains why he does not want now Madeline to go out. Moreover, he is geopathic because he is "unable to free himself from their old battle with the earth" (141). Ira is a victim of location because he cannot understand that things have changed, as the "dwarfed pioneer child" he is (141) he cannot stop considering that the only place where he can be safe is home. Hence all his sufferings, because he cannot comprehend that "Nothing stays at home" (155), that going out, as Madeline is about to do, is something necessary for her to fulfil her own identity and overcome her geopathology.

Ira's points above are also significant regarding the consideration of home as a shelter in terms of a haven against immigrants. Chapter 3 has discussed the issue of immigrants in relation with the American Myth of Mobility, here Glaspell employs the

immigrant characters to dramatically underline that Ira, a highly isolationist character, feels somehow attacked by the presence of these characters. In his attempt to make Madeline stay with him in the farm he says, “Don’t you leave me – all alone in this house – where so many was once. What’s Hindus – alongside your own father – and him needing you? It won’t be long. After a little I’ll be dead – or crazy – or something. But not here alone where so many was once” (155). For Ira, then, the farm is his shelter as long as he can keep his daughter with him, as long as he makes her believe that he is more important than immigrants. Glaspell grants Ira with a similar feeling regarding European immigrants. He rejects them all. Glaspell makes Ira mark proxemically his rejection of immigrants and his need for a shelter. When Emil Johnson, one of “them Swedes” (155), appears at his farm, Ira turns his back on him and goes to the room on the left, a further shelter within the shelter that has just been intruded by his immigrant neighbour.

Louise and Agatha in *Alison’s House* also endeavour to make a shelter out of their houses. Agatha’s enterprise, as already seen, finds in this house her own prison. Her effort to stay at home, feeling protected thus from the dangers she thinks outsiders bring, the publicity of Alison’s secret poems, does only lead to her final madness and collapse when she realises the inevitability of going outside. Glaspell also makes Louise, probably the most unfriendly and unsympathetic character in this play, create a metaphorical representation of home as shelter. For her, the Stanhopes’ house must be a shelter where, like in Agatha’s case, the family secrets can be protected and sealed. When the Chicago reporter, Knowles, intrudes in the house, Louise gets angry:

LOUISE: (*sharply*). What is this story of Jennie’s – about a reporter?

ANN: There was a reporter.

LOUISE: Did you talk to him?

ANN: Not much.

LOUISE: Where is he?

ANN: He went out just now.

LOUISE: Where?

ANN: Why, just out.

LOUISE: You refuse to talk to me – about a family matter ? [...] Father, I think you ought to know there’s a reporter in the house. Ann knows about it, and won’t tell. [...] Father! Please let’s try to do this without – stirring things up. Just because we’re breaking up the house do we have to revive the stories about Alison? (654)

Louise's fear that the configuration of this house as a shelter is breaking up grows when she learns that Knowles, the invader figure, has inspected Alison's room, the place where the skeletons in the closet of this family rest: "And you dared – and Ted dared – Oh, what management! (*She moves to the door, but STANHOPE follows*) [...] Serenity! With reporters prowling around!" and a bit later she adds, "The trouble is, Father, the family has too many – in the outskirts, who like to snatch a little bit of sensationalism" (656). Louise is determined to defend the family and treats this house as a fort against the dangers coming from outside, from the outskirts, that is, from people messing around the Stanhopes' secrets. But as she is not a legitimate family member, but the unloved wife of Eben, she has no power here. Hence, Louise will have to witness how the stories about Alison are revived as the house breaks up, and as the house reveals itself as a prison for most characters.

Eleanor in *The Comic Artist* is one of Glaspell's characters who struggles the most to keep her house as her shelter. She chose the house herself and decorated it, shaping it according to her identity and her tribute to her past.<sup>23</sup> But as soon as Luella and Nina appear, the displaced characters discussed in Chapter 3, Eleanor's shelter becomes threatened. It could be said that Eleanor's victimage of location comes from her engagement in the defence of her place. Interestingly, early in the play she has had a premonition that her house was being invaded: "Oh, what has come into our house!" "Will it ever be gone?" (54). Eleanor notices that Nina and Luella are going to destroy the peace she had created in her house, but her love for Stephen and her brother-in-law, Karl, deters her from expelling them:

ELEANOR: I don't believe I'd ask it for myself. That thing in me that won't – step in, you've called it selfish, but it's fiber of my fiber, bone of my bone! It keeps me from saying to her – I want you to leave my house!

STEPHEN: (*quickly*) Oh, you can't do that!

ELEANOR: It's what a woman would do now – and perhaps be right.

STEPHEN: But you don't see – you drive Nina away, you drive Karl too!

ELEANOR: Yes, I see that. But they would be gone, and our house would again be our house. Only, would it? (78)

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<sup>23</sup> The relationship between Eleanor's identity, her heritage and her house is developed in the following chapter, see pp. 212- 215.

Nevertheless, it could also be argued that Eleanor does not end her problem with place by expelling the intruders because she would like her husband to be the protector of the house-shelter. I partially agree with Ozieblo's remark that *The Comic Artist* lacks the hallmark of Glaspell's plays, "the determined woman who consciously models her own life" (2000: 234). Eleanor succeeds in modelling her life as she models the house, making her house mirror the identity she wants to have, but at this point she is not the typically Glaspellian female protagonist, strong enough to defend her place without the aid of a man. In the following quotation Eleanor asks Stephen to be the one to expel the women from the house, and the status of her house as both shelter and prison emerges clearly:

Oh, Stephen, keep me from doing that! Protect me – as a man should protect his wife! [...] Why is it I have almost known – and from whence comes my security and my happiness? Meddle-trap, then you are of the meddling, trapping world, and never again are you taken into silent beauty, as a child taken. (*Perhaps just because her hands were on it, she is pushing the goblet towards him.*) Will you do this for me, Stephen? Yes, how absurd I am. (*Laughing a little, but with tears.*) For in asking you to do it I am meddling. [...] Will take unto yourself this sin – and leave me – free? [...] Will you do this for me, as in the Catholic church they do things for one another, and then all the rest of my life – I'll say prayers for you. (79)

It is perhaps significant here that Eleanor uses the words "meddling" and "trapping." She finds freedom in giving her husband the role of defending her, in exchange for her eternal worship. The symbolism of the goblet is obvious here. Eleanor and Stephen are about to share the wine they made, materialising their union and reconciliation. Eleanor is asking to have her role of dutiful and respected wife back, while Stephen must become the protecting and loving husband. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that seeing that her husband will not help her to recover her house, Eleanor admits: "I asked Stephen to do something for me. It was cowardly. I must do it myself" (80). For a brief moment Eleanor equals other female protagonists in Glaspell's dramaturgy and tries to take command over her own life. Eleanor unsuccessfully attempts to convince Nina to love Karl and forget Stephen. But as suggested in Eleanor's earlier wonder, whether after the invasion, the house will be their house again, that is, whether it can be again the safe shelter Eleanor had created to mirror her identity is not clear. Through the invasion performed by the displaced characters, Glaspell and Matson make us reconsider the possibility of the home-shelter. In *The Comic Artist* the points seems that,



even after intruders have been expelled, no house can be a shelter against painful and reviving memories of the past. Eleanor has learned that Stephen had an affair with Nina, when she was just seventeen years old, and that he let his brother Karl marry her though he knew the kind of selfish woman she was. Moreover, these women have made Stephen think that the shelter his wife had constructed, and which he had cherished for so long, is but a source of solitude, a deadly enemy of the artist he is.

Mrs. Patrick in *The Outside* resembles other Glaspellian characters in her effort to create a shelter. But unlike Ira in *Inheritors* or Seymore in *Chains of Dew*, who create their shelters to protect themselves from the outside, or Eleanor in *The Comic Artist*, who had created a shelter to live, Mrs. Patrick wants a shelter to let herself die. In the same way that Eleanor had made of her house a reflection of her identity, Mrs. Patrick has chosen an abandoned place to equal the feeling of abandonment she experiences. Mrs. Patrick has not made any change to turn this place into what could be called a home, giving no hint that this can be indeed a shelter in the traditional sense. Bradford tells the other male characters about what he had heard the Patricks comment:

I heard them talkin' about it. They was sittin' right down there on the beach, eatin' their supper. They was goin' to put in a fire-place and they was goin' to paint it bright colors, and have parties over here – summer folk notions. (51)

That is, when the Patricks were together and planned to take over this place, they had thought out to turn the old life-saving station into a joyful and homely site. When Mrs. Patrick finds herself alone, she decides to take this place, but to keep it as far as possible from the image she had constructed with her husband. Indeed, according to the stage directions, there is not any piece of furniture, but a bench in a corner, and probably a bed and a stove, which had been taken to the station, but which do not appear in the stage directions. Mrs. Patrick has not turned the old life-saving station into a recognisable kind of home/shelter, a warm and nice place. The almost derelict state of Mrs. Patrick's home is her suitable shelter, metaphorical of the fact that she wants to let herself die, since she cannot find any joy in life after being abandoned by her husband.

Regardless of the kind of metaphorical shelter Glaspell constructs in this fictional onstage place, the important issue regarding dramatic geopathology is that Mrs.

Patrick's shelter is invaded. The male characters, Captain, Tony and Bradford, intrude on Mrs. Patrick's place without any restraint. Bradford tells how he had entered the old life-saving station to try to resuscitate the drowned sailor he had found: "So I kicked this door open with my foot (*jerking his hand toward the room where the CAPTAIN is seen bending over the man*) and got him away" (49, author's emphasis). So it is not only that the men had invaded the old life-saving station by entering it, but Bradford also makes explicit his use of violence, his kicking the door open, to move deeper into Mrs. Patrick's space. At this moment "the station has now become a battlefield of the sexes, the lifesavers and the women disputing the right to occupy territory on the edge of nowhere" (Ozieblo 2006a: 148- 149). One of the reasons to consider Mrs. Patrick a geopathic character erupts from this battle, because this is a battle for place, and importantly, a place she rightfully owns. Unsuccessfully, Mrs. Patrick commands the men to leave:

MRS PATRICK: You have no right here. This isn't the life-saving station any more. Just because it used to be – I don't see why you should think – This is my house! And – I want my house to myself! (49)

CAPTAIN: You'll get your house to yourself when I've made up my mind there's no more life in this man. [...] and if there's any chance of bringing one more back from the dead, the fact that you own the house ain't going to make a damn bit difference to me! (50).

The way men rule over Mrs. Patrick's space is also evidenced by the fact that the Captain, at his will, opens and closes the sliding door that joins the main room where the action takes place with the adjoining room where men are working over the sailor's corpse. He behaves as if he were in the life-saving station, not in Mrs. Patrick's house.

Kristina Hinz-Bode asserts that all three men "are drawn as decidedly sympathetic figures in their struggle for life, in their interactions amongst themselves, and even in their attitude towards women" (2006b: 92). While I agree that Glaspell grants the men in this play a very positive action, to resuscitate the sailor, which indeed will serve as a metaphor for the later symbolic resuscitation of Mrs. Patrick at the end of the play, the men's attitude towards women cannot be considered "sympathetic" for the reasons stated above. Not only does Mrs. Patrick but also Allie feel attacked by the male characters' violent presence in her house. Bradford describes how when he came to the

house, Allie “backs off and stands lookin’ at [them]” (49). Glaspell suggests Allie’s fear through movement and body language, by making this woman step back in space and through her paralysed body, standing there just looking at the invaders. Glaspell makes this case more obvious when close to the end of the play the male characters re-enter the stage, and Allie “*shrinks into the corner*” (54), using this corner as a shelter.

In his interesting analysis of the poetics of corners in space, Gaston Bachelard claims that “a corner is a semi-box, half walls, half doors” (1965: 183, my translation), it is a shelter that assures immobility, a place of imagination and solitude, “a negation of the universe” (1965: 182, my translation).<sup>24</sup> The use Glaspell makes of the physical corner of the stage space to place Allie reveals all the complexities Bachelard points out. Allie’s retreat to the corner when the men appear stands for her search of a shelter in the very place where she lives. In this manner, I believe that in *The Outside* Glaspell states a clear case of gender politics of location, about how men do not usually respect women’s places. It would be interesting to consider whether the Captain would behave in the same rude and despotic manner if there were a Mr. Patrick onstage. Probably, in this case there would not have been kicks on doors or rude words, and the old life-saving station would have not been under any means intruded.

*The Verge* is a very interesting play for an analysis of dramatic geopathology, for in this play Glaspell explores most radically the interplay in the configuration of the stage space as prison and shelter. Indeed, when referring to the fictional places Glaspell presents in this play, critics divide into those who believe that these sets constitute an “emblem of the socially restricted and shielded spaces” the protagonist is trapped in (Ozieblo 2000: 185- 186), those who see these sets as ““womb-like’ sanctums” (Papke 1993: 60) and “creative vaginal spaces” (Carpentier 2006a: 43), those who regard the sets as “physical projections of Claire’s mental state” (Gainor 2001: 154), and those who claim that the sets stand for “alienating environments” (Ben-Zvi 2006: 292). And all these versions are true, since they all reflect on different aspects of the stage space configuration in *The Verge*, and which all together contribute to Claire’s geopathology.

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<sup>24</sup> “El rincón es una especie de semicaja, mitad muros, mitad puerta” (Bachelard 1965: 183), “el rincón es un refugio que nos asegura un primer valor del ser: la inmovilidad. Es el local seguro, el local próximo de mi inmovilidad (1965: 183), “todo rincón de una casa, todo rincón de un cuarto, todo espacio reducido donde nos gusta acurrucarnos, agazaparnos sobre nosotros mismos, es para la imaginación una soledad” (1965: 182), and “El rincón es entonces una negación del universo” (1965: 182).

For Claire configures places which project her mental state, but instead of having a shelter, Claire has created different prisons for herself.

In Claire Archer Glaspell creates a female character that is exceptionally and fully conscious of the need to have a home that is a stable container of the self. As has been claimed, “*The Verge* takes place in Claire’s territories, her greenhouse and her tower” (Galbus 2000: 86). To create Claire’s territories Glaspell constructs onstage places that expressionistically represent Claire’s main feature: her rejection of traditional forms. One of Claire’s problems with place is that she cannot stand the shape of a traditional house, with its nicely and starkly built walls and roof. Bringing together Claire’s rejection of conventions and her will to escape the prison a domestic setting would represent for her, *The Verge* “occupies the outer perimeters of the domestic space. Both the greenhouse and the tower are sites separated from the main house, making even more evident Claire’s (and Glaspell’s) desire to explore alternatives to the domestic roles environment to which women are traditionally relegated” (Stufft 2006: 89), and physically trapped in.

Claire has constructed several rooms of her own, several shelters, dividing the space where she wants to be and where in principle she allows the other characters to stay. I agree with Arthur Waterman’s observation that this configuration of space “indicate[s] the private nature of Claire’s domain, with certain areas marked out as hers alone” (1979: 20). To begin with, the very first division can be found in the greenhouse, where there is a separation between the proper house, which never appears on stage, and the greenhouse. The latter is Claire’s work place, her place of creation. A glass partition separates the area within the greenhouse where the other characters can stay from the inner room where she and her employee, Anthony, work on the flower “Breath of Life.” Furthermore, Claire also has a room downstairs accessible from a trap door in the floor, and whose importance is highlighted when the play opens and a ray of light comes from this low room. To enter this room Claire has a key to open the trap door, keeping it with her at all times, together with the key for the greenhouse door. Claire’s keys, as I will discuss, are metaphors of her efforts to establish the rules of the power geometry of her places, places over which she commands to some extent, for she is able to let people in or out as she pleases.

While the configuration of the greenhouse enables Claire to have her shelter, and as Glaspell does with other home-shelters, there is a constant menace of invasion on the part of the other characters. At this point, we could say that Claire's problem with place is that she has to control entries and exits, endeavouring to repel invasions. Claire, nevertheless, sees her spaces invaded at different points throughout the play, as some critics have pointed out.<sup>25</sup> Early in Act I, the first invasion takes place in the greenhouse. Harry and Dick gather there to have breakfast, in spite of Claire's statement: "I'll not have you in my place" (61). While as the play opens the greenhouse is a laboratory, little by little, stage properties begin changing the identity Claire has provided to her place. An electric toaster, eggs and pepper shakers displace Claire's plants, attempting to turn this place into the usual home Claire rejects. For what Harry and Dick are doing here is to metaphorically translocate women's traditional place, the kitchen, to Claire's place. All these stage properties, related to the cult of domesticity Claire so utterly hates, and which are so out of place in this greenhouse, are placed on Claire's table in a symbolic invasion of her place. Anthony realises that Claire's space is being taken over as he covers the flowers with paper bags, to prevent them from being polluted by the breakfast (63). Furthermore, the fact that Harry strikes a match to light a cigarette also brings to surface Harry's invasion of Claire's place. But this female character, although she has seen her place invaded, still has some power over it. Claire deters him: "You can't smoke here. Plants aren't used to it" (63).

After seeing her greenhouse invaded for a second time, when Dick also enters, Claire starts showing her wish to control her places more seriously, being in command of doors and keys. Once Dick is inside, "*she shuts the door and leans against it*" (62). In the third attempt of invasion, when Tom tries to enter, even knocking on the door with the revolver and firing it (67), Harry says:

HARRY: Why – it's Tom! What the - ? (*going to the door*) he's locked out. And Claire's got the key. (*goes to the inner door, tries it*) And she's locked in! (*trying to see her in there*) Claire! Claire! (*returning to the outer door*) Claire's got the key – and I can't get to Claire. (*makes a futile attempt at getting the door open without the key, goes back to inner door – peers, pounds*) Claire! Are you there? Didn't you hear the revolver? Has she gone down the cellar? (*tries the trap-door*) Bolted! Well, I love the way she keeps people locked out!

DICK: And in. (67)

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<sup>25</sup> See for instance Galbus 2000: 86.

As Dick remarks, it is not only that Claire has locked Tom out and herself in, but she has also left Dick and Harry locked in. It could be argued that here Glaspell expands on the dramatic possibilities of geopathic representations of home as shelter or prison, merging conceptions of place as either shelter or prison in a pathological way. In *The Verge*, the female protagonist's need to have her shelter leads her to turn her house into a prison.

While it could be pointed out that Claire suffers from a pathology similar to Agatha's in *Alison's House*, for both turn their houses into prisons, it must be noted that Glaspell made Agatha unaware of her problem with place. But Claire's case is the opposite, as she is conscious of the dangers of being locked in. Claire wants to protect her space, to have command of her space and its divisions, and as she endeavours to keep the other characters spatially trapped, she helplessly has to trap herself and also the only character in the play she really loves, Tom. Very early in the play Claire makes clear her point that letting people get inside the greenhouse means lack of hospitality for her. While outside the snow is piling up against the windows of the greenhouse and Tom is locked out, freezing as he is waiting outside for the door to be opened, Harry reprimands Claire:

HARRY: Claire, have you no ideas of hospitality? Let him in!

CLAIRE: In? Perhaps that isn't hospitality.

HARRY: Well, whatever hospitality is, what is out there is snow – and wind – and our guest – who was asked to come here for his breakfast. To think a man has to say such things.

CLAIRE: I'm going to let him in. Though I like his looks out there. (*she takes the key from her pocket*) (68)

Comic as it may seem, letting Tom outside the greenhouse is Claire's act of love for Tom. She likes her looks outside, because he is free outside the walls of the house. This is Claire's idea of hospitality, to let people be free and outside.

Paradoxically, Claire's self-imprisonment contrasts her fear for being locked in, which Glaspell also presents through Claire's mania to have all the keys in her pocket:

HARRY: Adelaide came here to help you, Claire.

CLAIRE: Adelaide came here to lock me in. Well, she can't do it.

ADELAIDE: (*gently*) But can't you see that one may do that to one's self?

CLAIRE: (*thinks of this, looks suddenly tired – then smiles*) Well, at least I've changed the keys.  
HARRY: 'Locked in.' Bunkum. Get that out of your head, Claire. Who's locked in? Nobody that I know of, we're all free Americans. Free as air. (80)

While Claire is alone in the tower, her sister Adelaide comes up “to help” her, what Claire interprets as her sister's wish to trap her, that is, to make her come back to the woman's role she should adopt and respect. But Claire is glad to have changed the keys, because these new keys in her pocket provide her with the deceitful impression that she cannot be locked in. Because what Claire fears most is “to be shut up in with you [Adelaide]” (81), to be imprisoned together with Adelaide, that is to say, to become the kind of woman her sister is. In the scene quoted above it is also interesting to notice Harry's remark “we're all free Americans.” Taking into account the Sedition and Espionage Acts and the matter of Free Speech at that time in the United States, Harry's words here are poignantly ironic. Americans were all free as long as they moved along with the government. So the kind of freedom Claire pursues, to be “free as air,” is just as out of reach for her as for many other dissenting Americans. The American Myth of mobility, discussed in Chapter 3, takes here a political dimension, and Glaspell seems to point out that Americans seem not even free to move from the ideological prison marked by its government.

As suggested earlier, Claire's “thwarted tower” is her “refuge within her home” (Gainor 2001: 153). As such, the tower is the place which most clearly represents Claire's self and her rejection of traditional forms. The tower is described as follows,

*a tower which is thought to be round but does not complete the circle. The back is curved, then jagged lines break from that, and the front is a queer bulging window – in a curve that leans. The whole structure is as if given a twist by some terrific force – like something wrong. (78)*

After surveying the tower, the traditional Adelaide points out that the tower “lacks form” (91), since “A round tower should go on being round” (79). But precisely what Claire likes about the tower is that it represents the deviation from old forms she tries to find both for her plants and for her own life. The tower is a “free” building, free from the prison of traditional forms. Indeed, “She bought the house because” of the thwarted tower (79).

Glaspell also articulates Claire's problem with traditional and enclosing forms through the images Claire speaks through. Clarifying for the issue of the tower that does not go round is Claire's hate for the form of the circle. In the following scene Claire tries to explain to Adelaide her vision of the world as a circle, the perfect and finite form that stands for the forms moulded for us that the heroine despises. Adelaide, in contrast, sees this circle as the perfect form to be maintained, and as a metaphor of sheltering society:

CLAIRE: Here is the circle we are in. (*describes a big circle*) Being gay. It shoots little darts through the circle, and a minute later – gaiety all gone, and you looking through the little holes gaiety left. [...] (*moved, but eyes shining with a queer bright of loneliness*) But never one of you – once – looked with me through the little pricks the gaiety made – never one of you – once, looked with me at the queer light that came in through the pricks. [...]

ADELAIDE: You must see yourself that you haven't the poise of people who are held – well, within the circle, if you choose to put it that way. (82)

Making use of the circle as a metaphor of entrapment, Claire explains how she feels trapped in this perfect and enclosing form. However, she is happy to find some darts have opened little holes in the circle. Significantly, Claire's surname is Archer, symbolising her will to shoot arrows to enable her to breathe within the suffocating circle she is enclosed in. These little holes are her moments of vision, the times she has managed to see what is outside the prison she finds herself in. But Claire is afraid and lonely looking through the holes. And she will go on being so, since her sister cannot understand Claire's metaphor, and instead urges her to stay calmly "within the circle". Unable to make Adelaide understand her point, Claire cannot but confront her and, making use of her body language, so typical of Glaspell's female characters who find that words cannot articulate properly their thoughts, she destroys the imaginary circle: "CLAIRE, after looking intently at ADELAIDE, slowly, smiling a little, describes a circle. With deftly used hands makes a quick vicious break in the circle which is there in the air" (83). The imaginary circle is destroyed in the same way that Claire's tower does not complete the circle.

It is not coincidence then that the thwarted tower Claire loves so much shares with this circle image the little pricks in the wall that let the light come in. The tower is "lighted by an old-fashioned watchman's lantern hanging from the ceiling, the



*innumerable pricks and slits in the metal throw a marvellous pattern on the curved wall, like some masonry that hasn't been*" (78). Glaspell's use of lighting reproduces the same darts Claire dreamt of when breaking the circle. The pricks and slits in the metal lantern project these patterns on the whole wall, becoming the holes through which Claire dreams of looking beyond. And at the same time the patterns formed on the wall constitute the deviation from form Claire longs for. The shape is "like some masonry that hasn't been." That is, it is a form that is not a conventional form.

Glaspell also presents Claire's enterprise to demolish closed, prison-like forms, by making her break Tom's egg in Act I. The egg, with its oval form, can also be seen as an enclosing form, another "conventional pattern" (Sievers 1955: 71) Claire needs to get rid of:

CLAIRE: I want to break it up! I tell you, I want to break it up! If it were all in pieces, we'd be  
*(a little laugh)* shocked to aliveness *(to DICK)* – wouldn't we? There would be strange new  
 comings together – mad new comings together, and we would know what it is to be born,  
 and then we might know – that we are. Smash it. *(her hand is near an egg.)* As you'd smash  
 an egg. *(she pushes the egg over the edge of the table and leans over and looks, as over a  
 precipice)*

HARRY: *(with a sigh)* Well, all you've smashed is the egg, and all that amounts to is that now  
 Tom gets no egg. So that's that. (64- 65)

But the fact that Claire smashes the egg, for the delight she experiences seeing it falling down, means much more than leaving Tom without breakfast. First of all, Claire breaks here again a moulding form, making explicit her wish to go outside the prison of fixed forms: "Because you've gone dead in the form in which you found yourself, you think that's all there is to the whole adventure? And that is called sanity. And made a virtue – to lock one in" (65). Being inside the circle, as rejoicing in the fixed and closed form of the egg, means death to Claire. Furthermore, the fact that this first instance of violence on the part of Claire is against a stage property that belonged to Tom is revealing for Claire's final resolution to murder Tom, to smash life out of him and push him over the precipice.

Turning to Claire's tower as a spatial representation of her need to transcend traditional geographical places, and to reflect upon her places and her own subjectivity,

David Sievers, in his psychoanalytical study of *The Verge*, describes this strange tower as “a room shaped in curves with a bulging window like a womb. This apparently marks the first expressionistic distortion of scenery in our theatre for a subjective effect – that of unconscious ‘regression to the womb’” (1955: 71). Several feminist scholars have followed Sievers’s point, seeing the tower as a womb, the self-chosen reclusive place where she feels safe. Although one could also see in this tower a certain resemblance to the medieval and romantic quiet places where artists retreated to think and write, a place separated from the world but with a window allowing dwellers to look out. This suggestion of the tower as a reference to the romantic tower links to Arthur Waterman’s remark on the tower as “a private space, not a womb necessarily, but a retreat certainly, suggesting the aloneness of Claire and her psychological withdrawal from the human voices below” (1979: 20), a psychological withdrawal, it could be added, so necessary for the artist. A distorted rail of a spiral staircase leads to this place. In purely physical terms, this spiral case is meant to be a shackle to intruders, since for instance Adelaide has some difficulties climbing them, and it is also symbolic of the difficulties most characters have to understand Claire’s inner self.

For the close reader and for the attentive member of the audience, however, Glaspell leaves a physical clue to advance that Claire’s tower will never be an example of topophilia, or a happy shelter, but rather a transparent prison. It is noteworthy that “*the huge ominous window*” in the tower separates the stage space from the audience, a glass partition materialising the theatrical fourth wall:

The audience views Claire alone ‘as if shut into the tower’ through the huge convex window that separates them from the proscenium. In this way, Glaspell foregrounds the convention of the invisible fourth wall through which the audience can see the actors with a set that works expressionistically and experimentally against convention even as it suggests one of the conventions of realism. (Noe 2002: 160- 161)

As Christine Dymkowski also points out, Glaspell literally encloses Claire within the walls of the stage space: “It is most unusual for a playwright to separate characters from the audience with an actual physical barrier rather than a merely imagined fourth wall” (1988: 101). That is, from the point of view of the audience’s experience, and regarding its relevance for dramatic geopathology, the tower is, from the very beginning, a prison for Claire. Moreover, given that the tower is only accessible through a trap door on the

floor, Claire's possibilities of escaping in the case of invasion diminish. Claire is in a trap/prison, instead of in a shelter.

As happened in the greenhouse, the tower clearly ceases to be a shelter when it is invaded. Adelaide calls herself an intruder: "I am sorry to intrude" (79), and as Claire recognises: "You weren't asked up here now" (79). To this first invasion of her tower Claire answers in a mocking way. She approaches the window, the threshold to the outside. As if she were a medieval maid shut in a tower, Claire opens the window and calls Tom to save her: "'Tom! *Tom!* Up here! I'm in trouble!" (83, author's emphasis). Likewise, when they leave, Claire asks Tom, "Will you stay with me a while? I want to purify the tower" (84). Her place has not been respected and she feels it requires purification. But the purification does not last long. A bit later Dick, Harry, Adelaide and Dr. Emmons are all in the tower, and, even though she had invited "Everybody – up here!" (90), Claire feels her place has been invaded. Claire's geopathology is that she cannot maintain the privacy of the room of her own. Glaspell shows this proximically when all the characters are up in the tower, and Claire backs "*against the curved wall, as far as possible from them*" (91). Through this invasion and Claire's reaction, "Claire's position in the tower thereby becomes a metaphor for being 'imprisoned' by various cultural, sociological, and psychological factors attempting to keep her from completing her work" (Frank 2003: 123). Claire's collapse in the face of this invasion is so great that afterwards we learn that she had to get out of the tower, run to the house and lock herself in her room, a place where she "won't open the door" (93). Analysing Claire's movements in these fictional places, one could conclude that what Glaspell shows is some kind of chasing game. Claire tries to have her shelters protected, but these are invaded or turned into prisons in crescendo.

There is, however, only one place that is preserved intact throughout the play. Claire's downstairs room, the one accessible through the trapdoor in the greenhouse, is never invaded by the other characters. Significantly, this room can be interpreted as the Hell in medieval morality plays, also accessible through a trapdoor on the floor. This is a place where Claire can be herself, where she can work without being disturbed. Glaspell locates Claire twice in the threshold between this downstairs room and the greenhouse, and the analysis of these scenes is very interesting because they reveal Claire's resistance to join her family, representative of the society she rejects, and those

who try to make a proper woman out of her; that is, Claire's resistance to be imprisoned in "forms moulded for us." The threshold between these two rooms, the one downstairs and the greenhouse, function as a kind of protective space where Claire aims to avoid imprisonment. The first time Claire locates herself here occurs when Harry thinks Tom is going to shoot himself if he is not allowed to get into the greenhouse. Answering to Harry's desperate calls, "*the trap-door lifts, and CLAIRE comes half-way up*" (68). She stays a while in this position, enjoying the power she thinks she has over her space, watching Harry's futile attempts to communicate with Tom through mimics. The next time the trap-door is used as threshold in *The Verge* functions to express Claire's rejection to be imprisoned in her maternal role. Her daughter Elizabeth has just arrived:

*(The trap door begins to move. CLAIRE's head appears.)*

ELIZABETH: Mother! It's been so long – *(she tries to overcome the difficulties and embrace her mother)*

CLAIRE: *(protecting a box she has)* Careful, Elizabeth. We mustn't upset the lice [...] *(calling)* Anthony! *(he comes)* The lice. *(he takes them from her)*

*(CLAIRE, who has not fully ascended, looks at ELIZABETH, hesitates, then suddenly starts back down the stairs.)*

HARRY: *(outraged)* Claire! *(slowly she re-ascends – sits on the top step. After a long pause in which he has waited for CLAIRE to open a conversation with her daughter.)* Well, and what have you been doing at school all this time?

ELIZABETH: Oh – studying.

CLAIRE: Studying what?

ELIZABETH: Why – the things one studies, mother.

CLAIRE: Oh! The things one studies. *(looks down cellar again.)* (74)

Unnaturally for a mother who sees her daughter after a long time, Claire only shows her head, suggesting her rejection of her mother role.<sup>26</sup> She is not interested enough in her daughter, neither in respecting conventions about how a mother should greet her daughter, so she does not come up completely from the downstairs room. Actually, she has just shown up to give Anthony the box of lice and not to greet her daughter. Moreover, as Elizabeth tries to embrace Claire, a difficult task given that Claire has not ascended, Claire's rejection of her daughter becomes more evident, and even more when she prefers the well-being of "the lice" rather than greeting Elizabeth. Glaspell

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<sup>26</sup> Fernández-Morales 2002, Nelligan 1995 and Ozieblo 1995, among other scholars, have also identified Claire's rejection of compulsory motherhood.

makes Claire retreat even a bit lower, sitting on the last step. This last step represents geographically that Claire does not want to fully enter the social space her greenhouse has turned into, maybe afraid of the prison it may become. Furthermore, while sitting there and talking to her daughter she several times looks down to the cellar. A few sentences serve Claire to realise that Elizabeth is just a common social being, who studies “the things one studies” and who does “the things one does” (74). Her own daughter is imprisoned in form. Claire would rather be down, in her domain where she experiments with life, with the lice that will turn her plants into new forms, than in the deadly domain staying with her daughter and other social beings. Significantly, the occasion Claire finally goes up, she will try to hit her daughter, a climax of the geopathic character who cannot stand being imprisoned in given roles. It seems that no shelter can protect Claire. For the geopathic character, there is no place to hide eternally from family, as Claire eventually comes up to the greenhouse and meet her relatives.

It is interesting to see how in *The Verge* Glaspell reworks what are conventionally seen as metaphors of shelter, only to show them as prisons. While shells and caves are usually metaphors of protection, Glaspell makes Claire express her fear of imprisonment by using these images, the shell and the cave, as trapping spaces. Claire states that she is in “a cave”, which has sometimes opened allowing her to see “immensity” (87), a metaphor that mirrors the image of the circle and the darts that allowed her to see beyond the boundaries of the circle. Concerning this, Julia Galbus has pointed out that: “The Allegory of the Cave illustrates human beings’ habitual misperception. The Allegory is central to Glaspell’s play because Claire Archer accuses her friends and family members of being like Plato’s cave dwellers, unable to see what she has discovered outside” (2000: 85). In her article “Susan Glaspell’s *The Verge*: A Socratic Quest to Reinvent Form and Escape Plato’s Cave,” Galbus successfully develops the idea that what Claire struggles to achieve during the play is to escape Plato’s metaphysics, that is, the idea of given forms upon which Plato built his theory and which come enclosed in the image of the cave. As Galbus says, “Glaspell foreshadows late-twentieth century criticism of Plato and depicts clearly why forms can hinder creativity, language, and societal roles” (2000: 82). Galbus’s analysis is significant in spatial terms too. For what Claire struggles to achieve during the play is to escape the cave itself, the places she created as shelters, but which have become prisons. Her conception of place was new, and shelter-assuring; buildings which do not look like

any building seen before, places that reflect their owner's creativity and self. But once she has set the pattern, the form is not new any more, and besides, her shelters are invaded again and again.

The metaphor of the shell is what eventually leads Claire to kill Tom at the end of *The Verge*.<sup>27</sup> Tom proposes to Claire: "As there you made a shell for life within, make yourself a life in which to live. It must be so" (98). Tom commits a fatal mistake, for he offers Claire protection and the promise of being kept. Tom is offering Claire what Gaston Bachelard might call "the dream of a shelter" (1965: 150)<sup>28</sup>: "You will stay with me!" "I can keep you. I will keep you – safe" (99), says Tom. Turning to spatial metaphors, the confused Claire at first sees Tom as a gate in positive terms: "You fill the place – should be a gate. (*in agony*) Oh, that it is you – fill the place – should be a gate! My darling! That it should be you who –" (99). As Tom offers her the shell, a shelter, Claire responds with a spatial metaphor, Tom should be a gate, a metaphor of liberation. Thus, Tom's shell is not a shelter, but a prison for Claire. Claire soon realises Tom is not an open gate, but a closing one, and so he should die. For Claire, to be safe and protected is just the disguise of a prison.

To sum up, it could be argued that the geodichotomy between representations of home as prison or shelter serve Glaspell to create the sense of victimage of location in most of her plays. Indeed, a key aspect Glaspell exploits for the configuration of stage spaces we have called geopathic is the changing geodichotomy of representations of home as shelter or prison. As this section has analysed, in Glaspell's plays this dichotomy is not fixed, but subjective to the perception characters have of the places they inhabit and a changing perception in itself according to the dramatic development of each play. Glaspell employs different techniques to show home as prison, ranging from the trapping physicality of the onstage places she locates her characters in, to the establishment of links with offstage prisons to reveal the sense of imprisonment in other places by means of creating parallelisms, to the construction of homes as prisons through metaphors of entrapment. The analysis of Glaspell's construction of home as a shelter leads one to question the existence of such a place. In Glaspell's plays one finds

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<sup>27</sup> A close analysis of Claire's murder of Tom is provided in Chapter 7.2, pp. 315- 322.

<sup>28</sup> "[La imagen de la concha] suscita sueños de refugio" (Bachelard 1965: 150).

geopathic characters who believe they live in safe havens. However, Glaspell deconstructs these fictional places to show that no home is a shelter, since the utopian home-shelter is under question constantly. Glaspell presents dramatically many reasons why none of her characters should consider their homes unassailable shelters, and “stable containers of their selves.” In some cases these shelters are under the continuous menace of invasion, and in others characters turn their shelters into prisons in order to protect them. We have seen that Glaspell reworks conventional metaphors of protection, such as the cave and the shell, to turn them into metaphors of entrapment. On the whole, it could be said that in the dramatic discourse of geopathology in Glaspell’s plays, the problem her characters have with the geodichotomy between home as prison and home as shelter, is that basically, every home is a prison in itself. Indeed, most of the characters that endeavour to see their homes as a shelter end up mad, dead, or disheartened by the fact that their places are turned into battlefields where invaders attempt to hold strong. After reaching the conclusion that in geopathic drama, home as shelter is but a dream and that one of the main features of the Glaspellian geopathic characters is her/his entrapment, the following section focuses on another geodichotomy, that between inside and outside.

#### **4.3 Dramatic Geodichotomy between Inside and Outside**

This third geodichotomy, inside vs. outside, forms part of the subjective coding of the world that, according to Una Chaudhuri, geopathic drama displays. After having analysed the dramatic dichotomy between representations of home as shelter and prison, the aim of the present section will complete Glaspell’s use of geographical metaphors to point to her characters’ victimage of location. The present study of the geodichotomy between inside and outside in Glaspell’s plays takes this opposition both in physical and symbolic terms. That is, inside/outside, on the one hand, refers to the physical theatrical reality of being onstage or offstage, whose importance will be revealed here through a semiotic and proxemic analysis. On the other hand, inside/outside also refers, in linguistic terms, to those metaphors Glaspell’s characters employ to refer either to abstract offstage places (the idea of “the outside,” devoid of an identifiable referential location) or to abstract ideas; such as being free or alien to society. For as this section aims to demonstrate, Glaspell employs inside/outside as a metaphor to represent other dichotomies that inflict geopathology upon her characters: the struggles between the

community and the individual, between society and the alien, and between bondage to rules and absolute freedom. Given that Glaspell complicates the issue that every home is a shelter, the traditional equation, inside is good, outside is bad, does not seem to work in her plays. As Gaston Bachelard points out in his *La Poétique de l'espace*, in the poetics of space there is not a consistent relationship between inside and outside and goodness and evil. That is, inside and outside are not always totally opposed geometric points.<sup>29</sup> Thus, it is also the aim of this section to establish the consistency or instability of inside and outside as opposed geometrical points, or if, as in the case of the configuration of home as prison or shelter, both elements of the dichotomy blend.

Several critics have already identified Glaspell's emphatic usage of the words "out" and "outside," a metaphor she continually "uses in her writing to signify both alienation from society and freedom from the restrictions it imposes" (Ben-Zvi 2006: 280). Thus, "in" and "inside" are usually metaphors of community adherence and the subjection to the rules it inflicts. For the present analysis of geopathology, it could be said that Glaspell uses her characters' urge to get out of the walls of the places they are in, their movement from inside to outside, as a metaphor of the individual's need to break away from the kind of community represented in such places. *Close the Book* is much constructed upon the geodichotomy inside/ outside as a metaphor of belonging or not belonging to this idea of society presented. Indeed, it is the characters' opposing views about this gedichotomy that shape the plot of the play. Ben-Zvi has summarised the theme of *Close the Book* as "the fear of the outsider" (2006: 285). But this play is also about the outsider's fear of the inside. Glaspell primarily shows this issue through costume. Jhansi's costume is described as "*non-conformist*," that of a displaced character. Next, Glaspell places physically Jhansi, the "outsider," inside the walls of the onstage location representing the Roots' library, in constant opposition to her verbal references to the outside. Jhansi's very first words in this play set the geodichotomy inside/outside: "[*Springing up.*] It's absurd that I should be *here*!" (63, emphasis mine). Jhansi does not want to be "here," inside the library, and with her body makes her first attempt to go "out there." In opposition to the "here" she despises, the Root home, the family and the university as a fixed institution, she says to Peyton: "I should take you by the hand and you and I should walk together down the open road" (66). This open road

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<sup>29</sup> See Bachelard 1965: 272.



symbolises for her the freedom she wants and the link to what she thinks is her heritage: the gypsies. She would love to take the open road and live in a covered wagon, a metaphor of Jhansi's wish to be free; as "a wanderer," and "an outlaw" (84). Jhansi describes herself, "I am not a part of your society," "I am an outsider" (77). Jhansi has formed her identity as a gypsy, and that is what gives her pride, hence her apparent rejection of everything conventional and society, symbolised in the Roots' house, and her need to be outside this house.

As Ben-Zvi suggests, with *Close the Book* Glaspell reworks the idea that the dichotomy inside/outside is unmovable, for in this play borders are movable and outsiders can be brought in.<sup>30</sup> In contrast to Jhansi's need to be outside, her fiancé's family endeavours to bring her inside, to metaphorically integrate her inside society. Bessie's efforts to find out Jhansi's real origins, her Anglo-Saxon ancestry, reveal the Roots' necessity of ensuring that the new member is inside society. Bessie justifies her research: "I made it my affair because I love my brother" (80). This is just a family matter, the Roots' urge to keep the "inside" status of the family intact. When Bessie tells Jhansi that she is the daughter of a respectable Baptist family, she says "Welcome Within!" "You must not stand outside society! You belong *within* the gates," "You are one of us!" and "as respectable as we are" (79, author's emphasis). It is interesting to note that Glaspell capitalises "Within" to symbolise the respectful status that belonging to society represents, in contrast to the "outside society" status Jhansi had before.

In Glaspell's spatial metaphors in *Close the Book*, society has gates, and these have been opened for Jhansi to come back to where she belonged by birth. Clara and Grandmother had talked before about Jhansi's foster parents, note that they are also Anglo-Saxon and respected members of the community, to bring her "within":

GRANDMOTHER: How did this gypsy get here?

MRS ROOT: She was brought up by a family named Mason. But it seems she was a gypsy child, who got lost or something, and those Masons took her *in*. I'm sure it was very good of them, and it's too bad they weren't able to make her more Christian. She is coming to have a following in the university! There are people who seem to think because you're *outside* society you have some superior information about it. (70- 71, emphasis mine)

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<sup>30</sup> See Ben-Zvi 2006: 284.

This is a short and sharp dialogue regarding the politics of location. Grandmother's question, referring to Jhansi as "this gypsy", already locates the girl as an outsider, who got "here." Thus, Glaspell employs Jhansi's ethnic difference, as in the case of the Hindu students or the Native American absent characters in *Inheritors*, to present victimage of location, in the sense that ethnically different characters are primarily considered outsiders. Moreover, Glaspell uses the uncertainty of Jhansi's spatial origins to further locate her outside. She was "lost" somewhere, and the Masons "took her in," so she was outside. Jhansi, nevertheless, was not brought enough in, according to Mrs. Root. That is, she has not been assimilated into the community, since Mrs. Root still sees Jhansi "outside society." Jhansi is also referred to as the "stick" left out of the toddy. Glaspell firstly uses this comic but complex metaphor to talk about American literature. Peyton, a lecturer in English at the university, has made this comment that "American literature was a toddy with the *stick* left out" (69, author's emphasis), implying that American literature is a bad mixture of different streams, since the stick has been left out. But Clara uses this metaphor to run against Jhansi, claiming that "It's the girl. *She's* the stick" (70, author's emphasis), she is the outsider and the one that has led Peyton to appear in an editorial on "Untrue Americans" for this comment, breaking the harmony of the inside. Nevertheless, it must be noted that before the discovery that Jhansi is indeed Anglo-Saxon, and a legitimate member of the inside, Peyton's family had been considering bringing her metaphorically within the community: "She won't be a gypsy after she's Peyton's wife. She'll be a married woman" (74), says Mrs. Root. That is, by means of her marriage to an Anglo-Saxon and well-established in society man, Jhansi had to be part of the inside, like it or not. Her gypsy outsider identity will have to change for that of the married-to-an-Anglo-Saxon insider. It seems that as in other of Glaspell's plays, gender issues play a great role in the politics of location, for marriage, understood at this time as the woman's adherence to the man's place, could destroy the dichotomy inside/ outside easily.

Glaspell reworks the dialectics between inside and outside as metaphors of belonging to society or being alienated from a political point of view in *Inheritors*. As in *Close the Book* Glaspell metamorphosises society into a room with gates:

HOLDEN: I hate to see you, so young, close a door on so much life. I'm being just as honest with you as I know how. I myself am making compromises to stay within. I don't like it, but

there are – reasons for doing it. I can't see you leave that main body without telling you all it is you are leaving. It's not a clean-cut case – the side of the world or the side of the angels. I hate to see you lose the – fullness of life. [...] I think there is danger to you in – so young, becoming alien to society.

MADELINE: As great as the danger of staying within – and becoming like the thing I'm within?  
(152)

Professor Holden is warning Madeline about the dangers of being outside society when he says, “It's not a clear-cut case.” Glaspell complicates here the geodichotomy inside outside. This is not a simple, binary fight against “the side of the world,” the mundane inside, against “the side of the angels,” the outside, or a fight of evil vs. good. While Kristina Hinz-Bode claims that “it seems that the experience of life as lived in a web of social relations is understood as a purely negative phenomenon in this play” (2006b: 239), I believe that the point Glaspell expresses through Holden is that there must be something good in the inside, as well as some evil in the outside. Glaspell creates in Holden a character that suffers from the same geopathology as Madeline, a need to be outside society, but who unlike Madeline chooses the inside. Holden is a university teacher who is making “compromises” to stay “within,” that is, who is not defending the Hindu students as much as he would like because he acknowledges his need to be accepted in society, basically, because he needs money to look after his ailing wife. Glaspell justifies Holden's decision to stay inside society for his love for his wife. “if you sell your soul” to stay inside, says Holden, “it's to love you sell it” (153). In the scene quoted above, Holden tries unsuccessfully to make Madeline consider what she will lose for being outside, “becoming alien to society.”

Besides this verbal discourse for the “outside,” Glaspell also makes Madeline physically state her case for being outside. In the climax of Act III, Madeline has to fight to reach the outside, the offstage campus. In this scene, her uncle Felix Fejevary is trying to convince Madeline to be a respectable girl, that is, to stay inside society, and consequently, to stop her demonstrations for the Hindu students. Then, Glaspell makes the outside reach the inside as some offstage noise interrupts the onstage dialogue. As Madeline listens to the offstage confrontations between the Hindu students and the police, she rushes to open the window, breaking the barrier between inside and outside, the frontier between conforming to the rules and breaking them. Leaning her body through this window, Madeline shouts:

MADELINE: Sure you saw me at the station. And you'll see me there again, if you come bullying around here. You're not what this place is for! (*her uncle comes up behind, right, and tries to close the window – she holds it out*) My grandfather gave this hill to Morton College – a place where anybody – from any land – can come and say what he believes to be true! Why, you poor simp – this is America! Beat it from here! Atna! Don't let him take hold of you like that! He has no right to – Oh, let me *down* there! (*Springs down, would go off right, her uncle spreads out his arms to block the passage. She turns to the other way.*)

FEJEVARY: Holden! Bring her back to her senses. Stand there. (*HOLDEN has not moved from the place he entered, left, and so blocks the doorway*) Don't let her pass.  
(*Shouts of derision outside*)

MADELINE: You think you can keep me in here – with that going on out there? (*Moves nearer HOLDEN, stands there before him, taut, looking at him straight in the eye. After a moment, slowly, as one compelled, he steps aside for her to pass. Sound of her running footsteps. The two men's eyes meet. A door slam.*) (142, author's emphasis)

Despite Felix Fejevary's efforts to keep Madeline physically inside the library, a metaphorical extension of her uncle's wish to keep her inside society and under control, "in here," the female protagonist struggles to go "out there" and fight for what she thinks is right, for the freedom the Hindu students must have to state their beliefs in the free country the United States is supposed to be. It could be said that as Glaspell makes Felix and Holden, two male characters, attempt to stop Madeline, this could be regarded as a representation of how patriarchal forces try to stop the emerging strong female character. Glaspell makes Felix and Holden use their bodies, representative of men's usually superior physical strength, to block Madeline's rush to the outside. Nevertheless, Glaspell has previously hinted at Holden's wish to be outside society too. That is why he gives in, and steps aside for Madeline to pass, allowing her to reach the outside. In this proxemic discourse, Holden acknowledges that in this case, belonging inside society is a greater danger than being outside, for Madeline will surely suffer more from being kept on the inside she despises. Here Holden joins Madeline's idea that it is better to be alienated and outside of a society that rejects those who do not conform to homogeneity, either racial or ideological. Madeline's slam at the end of this scene is a straightforward reference to Ibsen's Nora. At this very moment, Madeline emerges as a New Woman. No more tennis playing. Her fight for defending outsiders has become her only and serious game, a game that has placed her also outside the gates of society.

*The Verge* is very special regarding Glaspell's revision of the geodichotomy inside/outside. If in the plays previously analysed we have seen the different meanings Glaspell provides to the inside and the outside dichotomy, in *The Verge*, the boundaries between inside and outside and what they might represent completely blur, granting this play with the complexity and greatness it enjoys. Some scholars have focused on some of the binaries Glaspell constructs this play upon. For instance, J. Ellen Gainor says that "The conflict presented in *The Verge* evolves from Claire's feeling of confinement – her desire to break away from the conventions and constraints of 'inside': society, her family, and their definition of her, to move 'out' to a new form and identity without barriers" (1989: 83- 84). For Marcia Noe, Glaspell creates the binary opposition between inside and outside "to emphasize the symbolic system Claire sets out to destroy" (1995: 133). That is, Glaspell creates binaries that Claire needs to destroy in order to be the free individual she struggles to be throughout the play, a point similar to Gainor's. I side with Noe's belief that the geodichotomy between inside and outside is established to represent the symbolic order Claire wants to destroy. I also believe that Claire's efforts to destroy the opposition between inside and outside is based on her rejection of what the inside represents: order, society, and family ties. However, what cannot be denied is that Claire only attempts to break the barrier between inside and outside, but never succeeds, and that her attacks on the inside are basically verbal. Claire's position on the outside is not physical, as we have seen in the previous section; she is on the inside, the greenhouse and the tower, unable to escape from these places and the community/family that wants her inside. Thus, the geodichotomy between inside and outside is much a rhetorical device in Claire's hands.

Moreover, the very set confounds the inside and the outside, so that one could wonder if there is a real inside and a real outside one can escape from or to, the existence of a promised land where one can be free. Regarding physical boundaries, Henri Lefèbvre claims that, "Visible boundaries, such as walls or enclosures in general, give rise for their part to an appearance of separation between spaces where in fact what exists is an ambiguous continuity" (1991: 87). This is exactly what Glaspell constructs in *The Verge*. The setting of the play is already constructed on a geodichotomy that blurs. Glaspell describes the glass delimiting the greenhouse,

The frost has made patterns on the glass as if – as Plato would have it – the patterns inherent in abstract nature and behind all life had to come out, not only in the creative heat within, but in the creative cold on the other side of the glass. (58)

Klaus Schwank has pointed out that in *The Verge* there is a clear boundary between the inside, the greenhouse, and the outside.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, due to Glaspell's employment of glass to separate the inside from the outside we can see this boundary as a fragile one, not only because of the symbolic connotation of having a easily breakable material separating both zones, Claire actually breaks the glass partition when she is murdering Tom, but also because the glass allows the conception of this space in a continuum, as Lefebvre would say. Indeed, Monica Stufft has pointed out that "Glaspell gestures toward dichotomies between inside and outside [...] in order to draw attention to the fact that each dichotomy is at least partially collapsed" (2006: 88). I agree with Stufft's point that given the participation of both inside and outside in the creation of the pattern on the glass, the delimitation between inside and outside collapses. One could not say that the creation of patterns on the glass is due to either the inside or the outside, but to both. Similarly, Glaspell represents visually Claire's inability to escape from the inside, basically because it is mingled with the outside. I agree with Wolff's observation that, "The solid yet permeable greenhouse walls provide an indoor environment that allows for aspects of the outside world to infiltrate, highlighting the inside/outside dichotomy and the continuum between the two" (2003: 207). The boundary between inside and outside in the tower is also fragile. At one point Claire opens the window, physically breaking the barrier between inside and outside. Nevertheless, this act is insignificant regarding "outness," since even though Claire's body is partly out, she is still trapped in the tower, and "the inside."

The most important issue is that Claire still needs the concept of the inside so that she can maintain her identity as an outsider trapped in the inside. In this concern, Kristina Hinz-Bode has counter-argued Noe's point, by saying that "far from disrupting (as Noe has suggested) the binary systems built up in the play's setting and imagery", Claire "essentially depends on the very concept of the detested 'inside' as it enables her to position herself on the 'outside,' and to give this space significance on the first place" (2006b: 174). I agree with Hinz-Bode, as I think that in *The Verge* Glaspell shows that

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<sup>31</sup> See Schwank 1989: 419.

geodichotomies are needed to shape her characters' identities, and that they cannot be destroyed, but only attacked. Claire's failed attempts to reach outside, physically and metaphorically, prove this, as I pass on to analyse.

Claire's language is a very interesting aspect to analyse regarding the emphasis placed on images of the outside. Together with Claire's entrapment in the onstage place the audience witnesses, verbal references to the outside contribute to our perception of Claire's geopathology. In order to express her need to be outside, that is outside society, traditional roles and traditional places; Claire employs some images that could be regarded as synecdoche extensions of the outside. She expresses her suffocation in the inside by insisting on terms such as sea, hill, gutter or air, elements of unlocalized fictional offstage places. In sharp contrast to the closed doors and trapping spaces that characterise the setting of *The Verge*, Claire wants to "feel the limitless – out there – a sea just over the hill" (78). The sea and the hill are metaphors of the limitlessness, and the openness "out there." It is interesting to note that Gaston Bachelard has identified hill and sea images with the representation of immensity which are poetically used to suggest the movement of an immobile person.<sup>32</sup> Thus, Claire's insistence upon the hill and the sea further manifest her urge to reach outside, to move out of the house and what being inside/outside represents.

Glaspell, nevertheless, makes Claire destroy the possibility of achieving freedom through the images of the hill and the sea. Claire dreams of going to these offstage places with Tom:

CLAIRE: (*raising her head, called by promised gladness*) We'll run around together. (*lovingly he nods*) Up hills. All night on hills.

TOM: (*tenderly*) All night on hills.

CLAIRE: We'll go on the sea in a little boat.

TOM: On the sea in a little boat.

CLAIRE: But – there are other boats on other seas. (*drawing back from him, troubled*) There are other boats on other seas. (98)

Glaspell makes the inside and the outside collapse here as well. For a moment Claire rejoices in the idea of living outside, up on hills and on the sea. However, her joy

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<sup>32</sup> See Bachelard 1965: 236.

vanishes when she realises that “there are other boats on other seas.” These boats on other seas represent society. That is, Claire will never be out in the sense of being different that she longs for so eagerly. There will always be other people around her, people who will make being on the sea or up on hills something conventional, turning these places into traditional ones too.

It could be said that Claire’s need to be in an outside place that can maintain the features of “the outside,” that is, a place where she can be free from society and traditional roles, makes her dream of being in the gutter. I believe that Claire’s statement “All I ask is to die in the gutter with everyone spitting on me” (92) epitomises her geopathology. Mary Papke sees the importance of this moment in the play: “Claire asks only ‘to die in the gutter with everyone spitting’ on her so that she might at least feel something” (2006b: 32). Given Claire’s complete rejection of society, interpreting this spitting as her need to feel would make her part of society. I think, however, that what Claire wants with this spitting is precisely total alienation, the acknowledgement that society (“everyone”) feels disgust towards her. Moreover, nothing has been said about the gutter as location. It could be said that the gutter is, indeed, the most marginal place of the outside. The gutter is on the edge, the verge, of the main road. If in *Close the Book* Jhansi verbalises her need to be outside with the open road, in *The Verge*, for Claire, who suffers the victimage of location more painfully than the gypsy-turned-into-Anglo-Saxon character, the open road is not open enough. Glaspell makes Claire verbalise her yearning for the outside by placing herself in this marginal space where all the dirt of the open road collects, that is, where the most alienated people can find themselves. In fact, Claire employs the gutter as a placement of renewal: “From the gutter I rise again, refreshed” (94). As if she were a phoenix, the gutter contains the ashes from where Claire raises again after her collapse in Act II.

Glaspell also exploits the geodichotomy between inside and outside in *The Verge* through Claire’s insistence upon being in the air to verbalise her need to be outside. Her very name includes the noun “air” within, as if to express Claire’s inherent need to be in the outside. Claire says,

To fly. To be free in the air. To look from above on the world of all my days. Be where man has never been! Yes – wouldn’t you think the spirit could get the idea? The earth grows smaller. I am



leaving. What are they – running around down there? Why do they run around down there? Houses? Houses are funny lines and down-going slants – houses are vanishing slants. I am alone. Can I breathe this rarer air? Shall I go higher? Shall I go too high? I am loose. I am out. (69)

Claire proposes to escape her victimage of location through flying, leaving the earth. Henry F. May has highlighted the symbolic power the airplane had for the moderns. He describes the feelings the airplane aroused in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century:

A fragile thing of wire and canvas, looping the loop at county fairs, it was to some of the younger generation a *symbol of magical hopes*. To some conservatives, man in flight was a disturbing sight: *if he could do this, what natural law could he not break?* (1960: 335, emphasis mine)

Claire, as a member of the younger generation May talks about, perceives the magical power of the airplane, and she uses it to express her desire to break other “natural laws”, the laws that society has created about propriety and fixity. This flight imagery allows Claire to leave the house and the social roles that constrain her. She finds freedom in the air, where she is “out.” And from this position, she can mock all those “running around” down there in little houses, all those trapped people who cannot but run around. Claire tried to materialise this dream of escape, her attempt to break natural laws, through her marriage to Harry, an aviator, but as she says “it didn’t take us out. We just took it in” (69). Instead of flying free in the air, Harry, in the role of husband, representative of the conservative society Claire rejects, kept her tied to earth, living in the house where the play is set. At this point, it is interesting to note Glaspell’s use of flying images to express a character’s will to leave the earth, i.e. normality. Indeed, her unfinished, undated, and unpublished play “Wings (Over Obadiah)” is totally constructed upon this image. In this short play, the protagonist is obsessed with creating artefacts to fly, in spite of the laughs and malign comments of his neighbours. As with Claire, he is also called “Crazy.” But Isaiah, the protagonist, tells his wife: “Wings, Annie. Wings for leave the earth on. (*He as spread out his one long arm*) Wings to fly above the frettin’ and the laughin’. Wings to learn the air on!” (8).

Perhaps the most evident symbol of the struggle between the inside and the outside in *The Verge* is Claire's experiments with plants.<sup>33</sup> It could be said that, given Claire's impossibility to leave the inside (society) by actually leaving the place she lives in, she tries to reach the outside through her plants, with which she aims to demonstrate that "There is outness – and otherness" (64). As Gainor says, Claire's "horticultural experiments, first with the 'Edge Vine' and then with the flower 'Breath of Life,' mirror her own struggle to control her life and break free from convention" (1989: 83- 84). Claire's explanation of her experiments deserves being quoted in full:

These plants – (*beginning flounderingly*) Perhaps they are less beautiful – less sound – than the plants from which they diverged. But they have found – otherness. (*laughs a little shrilly*) If you know – what I mean. [...] They have been shocked out of what they were – into something they were not; they've broken from the forms in which they found themselves. They are alien. Outside. That's it, outside, if you know what I mean. [...] Out there – (*giving it with her hands*) lies all that's not been touched – lies life that waits. Back here – the old pattern, done again, and again and again. So long done it doesn't even know itself for a pattern – in immensity. But this – has invaded. Crept a little way into – what wasn't. Strange lines in life unused. And when you make a pattern new you know a pattern's made with life. And then you know that anything may be – if only you know how to reach it. (76- 77)

Claire's speech summarises the significance of the geodichotomy between inside and outside for her in the play. The inside means convention, society, imprisonment and death; while the outside, what is "out there," means individuality, freedom and life. It could be said that Claire's experiments with plants are her means of escaping place as a problem, her means of departure. I agree with Marcia Noe's point that, "Claire's project is not only a botanical project, not the project of her own personal development but also the modernist project of rejecting old forms and the feminist project of rejecting the old patriarchal social order of separate spheres and asserting the right of women to claim their own space for their own work as well as to define and speak for themselves" (2002: 159). If she succeeded in reaching "outness" with her plants, she could still have hope that "the outside" in more general terms can be reached.

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<sup>33</sup> In the previous section I have suggested that Claire experiments with plants to escape the "prison" of conventional forms. Now, given that Glaspell verbalises Claire's experiment emphasising "outness," I analyse the importance of plants for geopathology in *The Verge* in this section.

But as happened with the form she gave to the places she lives in, and which attempted to break from the conventions of the inside, the shelters that became prisons, Claire's experiments with plants will also fail, making us wonder whether the outside can indeed ever be reached. The Edge Vine is her first experiment, and its importance is enhanced as the play opens with it. With an excellent use of lighting to suggest the appropriate atmosphere, magnifying shadows and forms, the play opens with the Edge Vine, "*nothing is seen except this plant and its shadow*" (58). This plant has long leaves and a "*huge brilliant blossom*" with "*twisted stem*" that projects from right front (58). "*It is arresting rather than beautiful. It creeps along the low [back] wall, and one branch gets a little way up the glass. You might see the form of a cross in it, if you happened to think it that way. The leaves of this vine are not the form that leaves have been. They are at once repellent and significant*" (58). It seems Claire has achieved "otherness" with this plant, which has leaves different in form. But then Claire realises that "It isn't – over the edge. It's running, back to – 'all the girls.' [...] (*looking sombrely at it*) You are out, but you are not alive" (77). The Edge Vine "cannot create" (77), thus, in a matter of time it will be trapped in form again. Significantly, Claire unearths her Edge Vine and menaces with hitting her daughter Elizabeth, "a true flower" (77), and a girl that is "like all the girls," that is, conventional, with it. Both her creations, the Edge Vine and her daughter, have failed her by being conventional, the Edge Vine trapped inside form, and Elizabeth being proudly inside society. Claire acknowledges her love for the plant, since it took her "where I hadn't been" (78). Notwithstanding, as its name symbolises, the plant just came to the edge, but it did not go further. Claire's next experiment is her attempt to beat this limit, because she does not want to "die on the edge" (78).

Glaspell creates an aura of mysticism around the Breath of Life that foreshadows a promising future for this plant. From the beginning of the play the Breath of Life is kept a secret. Unlike the Edge Vine, Breath of Life is not located centre-stage, but in the inner room from which we can perceive "*the plant like caught motion glows as from a light within*" (92). With the use of light again, Glaspell provides the plant the leading importance it has for Claire and for the dramatic development of the play. When the plant is brought "out of its own place" (95), into the main room, Claire is congratulated on her achievement. The flower is "stronger, surer" and "more fragile" at the same time (96), and "a good deal of novelty" (96). It seems it has escaped form, going beyond the

limits of plants: “then, it is out”, says Claire (96). But again Claire’s success becomes her own failure. She becomes rigid and utters,

CLAIRE: (*and though speaking, she remains just as still*)

Breath of the uncaptured?

You are a novelty

Out?

You have been brought in.

A thousand years from now, when you are but a form long repeated,

Perhaps the madness that gave you birth will burst again,

And from the prison that is you will leap pent queernesses

To make a form that hasn’t been –

To make a person new.

And this we call creation. (*very low, her head not coming up*)

Go away! (96)

Claire’s broken utterance verbalises the impossibility of demolishing the geodichotomy between inside and outside in this play. Claire acknowledges the futility of her attempt to reach the outside through her plants because forms will always be repeated. Her Breath of Life becomes but a fixed form, it is “brought in.” As long as forms are captured, they are trapped in, becoming in turn patterns and models for forms to come. The artist’s quest to find the untrapping form is an impossible one. As Nester points out, through Claire’s quest what Glaspell reveals is that “There is no otherness. Otherness exists only in binary opposition to sameness, to which it is inextricably bound. Without repetition and constancy, otherness or difference ceases to exist” (1997: 4). Although Claire is probably the strongest of Glaspell’s female characters, all her attempts to reach outside, that is, outside the house, outside society, outside roles, prove a failure, giving thus way to her increasing feeling of victimage of location.

This section has focused on the geodichotomy between inside and outside in the most astounding cases found in Glaspell’s plays. Glaspell employs the concepts of the inside and the outside both in physical terms, by actually making use of the stage space, and verbally, through the metaphorical use her characters make of the inside and the outside. There seems to exist a correlation in some of her plays between being inside and feeling trapped by family, society or given roles, or even the government, as in *Inheritors*, while the promise of freedom from any kind of bondage lie “out there.” The

typical geopathic character is forced to be on this suffocating inside while dreaming of the outside. Nevertheless, Glaspell complicates the issue of being inside and outside, because in some of her plays inside and outside do not appear as completely opposed geometrical points. As seen in *Close the Book*, the border between inside and outside can be altered at convenience. And in the most extreme case of in *The Verge* one can conclude that the promise of the outside, of freedom from society, family and convention, aspects that turn place into a problem for the geopathic character, is unreachable. Claire, an epitome of geopathology, cannot but struggle endlessly in a battle against the inside that she is dammed to lose.

In conclusion, this chapter has analysed the main geodichotomies upon which Glaspell constructs place as a problem in her plays. As seen in this chapter, features of the geopathic character; longing for freedom, feeling of entrapment, subjugation to rules, are portrayed both physically in the onstage places, as well as verbally through spatial metaphors. This chapter is divided into three sections. A first section has focused upon Glaspell's construction of isolated homes, symbolic of the alienation some of her geopathic characters feel. This preliminary analysis of the isolated conditions of the fictional homes Glaspell creates onstage has served to hint at the two main ways geopathology appears in her plays. On the one hand, some of Glaspell's characters are geopathic because they are forced to live in isolation when they need the community, and on the other hand, Glaspell constructs isolated homes for some other of her characters as metaphors of their solitary struggle against a community which alienates them as different but does not completely set them free. The two subsequent sections have analysed binary oppositions between the configurations of home as either shelter or prison and the confrontations between the inside and the outside. In general terms, it could be said that Glaspell reworks these geodichotomies and that they rarely maintain a fixed meaning. Moreover, in the most extremes cases, we have seen that for geopathic characters no home can be a shelter, but always a prison, or at least a battlefield to defend one's place, and that the outside is a utopian concept that vainly promises the geopathic character a freedom from the society, family and roles that keep her tied to one place. The present analysis of geodichotomies in the creation of dramatic geopathology gives way to one aspect of geopathology every character has to go through: the spatial burden of the past. No matter whether these characters want to be outside or inside, or whether they want to consider their houses a prison or a shelter, all

of them have a past. The extent to which these characters can stand the spatial presence of their past will reveal their degree of geopathology. Moreover, the following chapter also takes into account the past as an element of dramatic geopathology when it gives way to characters' confrontations for the defence of or opposition to such representations of the past in space.

## **CHAPTER 5**

# **THE BURDEN OF THE PAST IN DRAMATIC GEOPATHOLOGY**

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### **THE BURDEN OF THE PAST IN DRAMATIC GEOPATHOLOGY**

Time does not dim what is real ... The past does not lose its voice, but is there to speak to us.  
(Glaspell 1942: np)

The relevance of the presentation of the past in spatial terms for a study of dramatic geopathology is based upon the very relationship between past and identity. Doreen Massey has pointed out that,

The unearthing of heritages and so forth, is interpreted as being, in part, a response to desire for fixity and for security of identity in the middle of all the movement and change. A 'sense of place', of rootedness, can provide – in this form and on this interpretation – stability and a source of unproblematical identity. [...] On this reading, place and locality are foci for a form of romanticized escapism from the real business of the world. (1998: 151)

Characters in plays, as people in real life, do not appear in a void, but are the fruits of heritage. Besides the influence that locations have on identity, to a great extent we are also who we are because of our past. On the one hand, and as Massey believes, the past helps to fix our identity, giving us “a sense of place.” But on the other hand, our past can become a problem for identity, when this heritage presses upon us an identity we do not want to maintain. “The past helps make the present,” says Massey (1995: 187). The relevance of the past in spatial terms is that the past is not an abstract entity, since it is fixed in space. As Massey also claims, “The past is present in places in a variety of ways. It is present materially,” and verbally, through “Words, language, names” (1995: 186- 187). Materially the past is alive in places through different means, such as photographs, books or monuments. And the past is also fixed in places through verbal references, such as the names of streets or villages. In theatre the past is also identifiable. In Glaspell’s fictional places, she displays “an acute sensitivity to homes [...] as material embodiments of, and links with, the past” (Ben-Zvi 2005: 334). The analysis of how Glaspell suggests spatially the importance of the past for her characters’ identity will be the starting ground in this chapter to determine the role of the past within dramatic victimage of location.



A very important aspect to be taken into account regarding the representation of the past is that, as Massey highlights, “the past of a place is open to a multiplicity of readings as is the present.” Consequently, “the claims and counter-claims about the present character of a place depend in almost all cases on particular, rival, interpretations of its past” (1995: 184- 185). Susan Glaspell herself was attracted by this idea of the changing and multiple meanings of the past. Indeed, in the fragment of a play she never finished, one of her characters says: “Never study history – they are always changing it about. History is not there to defend itself – if it could put up any defence – so they make it anything they want it to be. History depends entirely on the kind of person you are.”<sup>1</sup> This fragment suggests that Glaspell wanted to develop the idea that Massey has later theorised upon, that history is a creation of those who write it.<sup>2</sup>

The idea that Glaspell and Massey have stated, that the past can have different, and also rival interpretations, is pivotal to understand the dramatic principle of the victimage of location, since different geopathologies can be born out of spatial representations of the past, as this chapter discusses. On the one hand, some characters may see place as a problem because this place represents a past and an identity they do not want. Root is a key word to understand the power of the past in this concern. For Linda Ben-Zvi, “Unlike O’Neill, who blamed the failure of American society on its inability to set down roots, Glaspell saw roots as marks of fixity and stagnation, choking off the free growth of an individual, institution, or society” (2005: xii). However, roots are not always negative marks of fixity in Glaspell’s works. In many of her plays, Glaspell dramatises these poles: characters looking for their heritage to exploit it as a means of rooting their identity, and even struggling to maintain this past in their places, and characters who do not accept such inherited impositions. Both cases have a role in the dramatic representation of geopathology and in Glaspell’s characters’ creation of their own identity in a given location. Closely linked to the different interpretations and views of the past we may find in the analysis of Glaspell’s plays, we find the generational conflict. That is, a key trope in the confrontation between rival views of the

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<sup>1</sup> “It is very sad a great ...” Undated play fragment, Susan Glaspell Papers, Berg Collection, New York Public Library.

<sup>2</sup> It must be noted that decades before New-historicism, Glaspell already equated history and story, since all “historical” accounts are but literary recreations, and then stories.

past is that reflected upon different generations of characters, and what these characters want to do with their past, either to adhere to the identity that past provides or to alter it.

### 5.1 Dramatic Re-negotiations with the Pioneer Heritage

Throughout this thesis, we have seen that Glaspell, due to her own origins, is heavily influenced by her pioneer heritage. This section tackles the pioneer past and shows how this past constitutes a spatial burden for some characters and how it becomes the starting point for generational conflicts, contributing thus to geopathology. Glaspell displays the burden of this past particularly in two plays, *Close the Book* and *Inheritors*.

In *Close the Book* Glaspell portrays very straightforwardly the vivid quality of heritage in the present lives of her characters. It is not coincidence that the family surname is Root, a symbolic appeal to this family's close link to its past. *Close the Book* opens in the library room of the Roots, a family of "inheritors," in the sense that their roots are based on the most important classes of society: soldiers and university men (a combination Glaspell would come back to in *Inheritors*). The way the room is configured points to the status of this family:

*SCENE: The library of the ROOT home, the library of middle-western people who are an important family in their community, a university town, and who think of themselves as people of culture. It is a room which shows pride of family: on the rear wall are two large family portraits – one a Revolutionary soldier, the other a man of a later period. On the low book-cases, to both sides of the door rear, and on the mantel, right, are miniatures and other old pictures. There is old furniture – mahogany recently done over: an easy chair near the fireplace, a divan left. A Winged Victory presides over one of the book-cases, a Burne Jones is hung. It is a warmly lighted, cheerful room – books and flowers about. (63)*

Two key words appear in the quotation above: "culture" and "pride." This is a room the Roots have created to re-affirm their identity and to show off. The stage properties; lots of books, the Winged Victory and the Burne Jones, show the family's interest in culture. Furthermore, the Roots have a special interest in past artistic forms. Although what the books are about is never told, the other art pieces in the room stand for tradition, not for modernity. The Winged Victory is a Classical masterpiece. And the Burne Jones displays a "nostalgic cult of the past which found expression in the Pre-Raphaelite poets

and painters” (Bablet 1981: 1- 2). But the Roots’ library does not only show love for the past regarding art, but also regarding their ancestors. Two portraits preside in the room. The portrait of “John Peyton of Valley Forge” relates to the status that war gives to a family within society.<sup>3</sup> There is also a portrait of a man of a later period, which turns out to be a portrait of Richard Peyton, the founder of the town college. Therefore, this portrait and the books crowding the library also stand for the family’s heritage: the university. Even before the foundation of the college, the family had already dedicated to teaching: “Peyton’s grandmother is a descendant of Gustave Phelps – one of the famous teachers of pioneer days” (68). And at present, Uncle George is President of the Board of Regents; and Peyton Root is an instructor of English in the University. They represent how the tradition of being university men has passed from generation to generation since pioneer times.

The Roots’ pride in their heritage is also evidenced by the lots of miniatures and old pictures of family members, as well as by the fact that the pieces of furniture are old. On the whole, the room gives the impression that the Roots live quite happily there and do not want to change anything. As if it were a museum, the configuration of the library tells the family history, constituting a stable container of the Roots’ identity. Besides, this room is a “*comfortable*” place (64), as the dim light and the flowers suggest. In sharp contrast with the peaceful atmosphere of the library set, the character of Jhansi hates the room, calling it “a dreadful place” (64), suggesting a first confrontation between the pioneer heritage established in the library, and that the Roots want to maintain, and the sense of abjection Jhansi seems to feel about this place and what it represents.

Glaspell makes use of a stage property to break the idyllic atmosphere of this room as a sanctum of beloved heritage and to question Jhansi’s estrangement from the Roots’ tradition. When a genealogy book of the Iowa Descendants of New England Families is brought into the room, the action of the play starts, provoking very comic

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<sup>3</sup> Family pride regarding wars in *Close the Book* is further developed in Chapter 6.3, p. 266.

moments, as well as some serious thoughts about identity.<sup>4</sup> The genealogy book appears as the Bible of heritage, the document that supports these characters' pride in their past and their status within society. Bessie brings this "*large book*" to testimony that Jhansi is not the daughter of gypsies, but of very "respectable" people. Jhansi's father was "a milkman in the town of Sunny Center – an honorable and respected man." Her ancestors participated in the American Revolution, her mother taught in the Sunday-School, and their marriage took place in the Baptist Church (80- 82). Moreover, she learns that her exotic name, which she found the maximum proof of her gypsy heritage, comes from a town in India where there was a missionary Jhansi's mother supported (84). Jhansi's heritage mirrors exactly all she despises: respectable and normal church people. The other characters, but Peyton, agree on the importance that ancestors have to forge their identity, and so they recommend Jhansi to behave different now that she knows where she really comes from. She is now supposed to be as respectable and as "within society" as her parents were, something Jhansi is not willing to accept:

So *this* is what I was brought here for, is it? To have my character torn down – to ruin my reputation and threaten my integrity by seeking to muzzle me with a leg at Bull Run and set me down in the Baptist Sunday-School in a milk-wagon! I see the purpose of it all. I understand the hostile motive behind all this – but I tell you it's a *lie*. Something here [*Hand on heart*] tells me I am not respectable! (84, author's emphasis)

However comic, Jhansi's words state her unwillingness to accept that her heritage is the same present in the respectable house of the Roots. While she had dreamt of a gypsy's covered wagon, her real heritage links her now to an Anglo-Saxon milk wagon, placing her inside the "respectable" circle of society.

A proxemic analysis of how Glaspell makes her characters pass around the genealogy book can be interesting to discuss heritage and identity. The book appears in the hands of Mrs. Byrd, a relative of Jhansi. Mr. Byrd then shows it to Jhansi, so that she can see with her own eyes that she is the daughter of the Harrisons. Jhansi's

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<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to notice that in *The Road to the Temple* Glaspell asserts Cook's delight in drawing genealogy charts, finding entertainment in his ancestors. Cook even found his connection with Benjamin Franklin: "he was my father's mother's mother's father's father's father's father's son's son" (Cook qtd. in Glaspell 1926: 5). It seems possible that Glaspell found inspiration for *Close the Book* in her husband's hobby.

rejection of “this story” (82) is suggested in her denial to even hold the book. On the contrary, Uncle George, who is very proud of his ancestors, takes it. He is eager to find more notable ancestors in the book, because according to him, “Genealogy is interesting. One is democratic, of course, but when there is behind one what there is behind us, Senator, it enhances one’s powers – responsibility – obligation” (83, author’s emphasis). Furthermore, he recommends the book to Peyton and Jhansi “for study,” to “think a little of those worthy men from whom you come” (89). At this point, the similarity between Uncle George and George Cram Cook surfaces clearly. Glaspell points out in *The Road to the Temple* that Cook “felt pride in these men from whom he came,” and quotes him: “Male ancestors still tend to become tribal gods whom marvellous stories descend, and it is part of the piety to believe them” (Cook qtd. in Glaspell 1926: 5). Nevertheless, Glaspell provides a very comic trick in *Close the Book* when the genealogy book reveals male ancestors who are far from being tribal gods. Although it “does not emphasize unfortunate occurrences” (91), the book has some “fine prints,” which briefly describe those episodes about families which are not pleasant. While Senator Byrd says that “It is in fine print because it is not important” (92), it is precisely this fine print which interests Jhansi and Peyton, who try to find “unrespectable” people in their pasts, most of all.

Of course, Jhansi “seizes the book” when she is told that her grandfather “burned down the neighbor’s house because that neighbor had chased home his pigs” (91). That is, she turns to the book when she is told that the book contains an episode that could support the identity of a rebel she wants to maintain, that she can still feel that she is “not respectable” (84). In the same manner, Peyton takes the book to examine fine prints, to find those episodes from their families’ past which are far from “respectable.” It turns out that one of Jhansi and the Byrds’ relatives, Peter Byrd, was a grave robber. College founder Richard Peyton’s father, Stuart Peyton, sold alcohol and guns to the Indians. Glaspell’s point is that, by carefully choosing those episodes in their pasts that they prefer, the past is used to support the characters’ present way of living, to enhance their feeling of power, their pride and position in society, or their will to be alien to society, as in Jhansi and Peyton’s case. From the present perspective, the past is something characters manipulate at their will to make them feel securer about their own identities.

In her more mature play, *Inheritors*, Glaspell returns to the past in space and tests her characters' behaviour, regarding the role played by their heritage in the formation of their identities. Besides portraying her own romantic version of the old pioneer days, their ideals of community, pacifism, and equality; and how the present-days characters had betrayed all these ideals, their heritage,<sup>5</sup> Glaspell employed some spatial elements to contrast further heritage vs. characters' manipulation of that heritage to suit their identity. In spatial terms, Glaspell carries out the portrayal of heritage through some important stage properties: books and portraits. The first cornerstone of heritage Glaspell places onstage is Lincoln's portrait. It is not a coincidence that Glaspell chooses a portrait of the sixteenth president of the United States, because Lincoln was considered, and still is, "the original All-American" (Morris 2000: 4- 5). In the purest Franklin style, Lincoln went from rags to riches. Born in a log cabin at Sinking Spring Farm in Kentucky, he evolved from frontier farmer and small-time shopkeeper and lawyer to Commander-in-Chief during the Civil War, the most challenging crisis America had ever experienced. Moreover, Abraham Lincoln concurs with the pioneers of *Inheritors* in his participation in the Black Hawk War (1832). As a veteran, Lincoln was awarded a small tract of land in Council Bluffs in Iowa, compensation similar to that achieved by the Mortons in *Inheritors*.<sup>6</sup> It could be said that Glaspell employs Lincoln's portrait as a constant reminder of pioneer values, the fight for freedom and democracy, and the desire for the post-Civil War union. Besides the realistic similarities established between pioneers and Lincoln, Lincoln's portrait on the wall of the Morton farm evinces the positive, encouraging, and feasible possibilities of pioneer life. But I think that Glaspell also places Lincoln's portrait onstage to bring to our minds both the image of *the loss of innocence* in the Civil War, and the image of Lincoln's assassination by the Southerner and pro-slavery actor John Wilkes Booth at Ford's Theatre on April 14, 1865.<sup>7</sup> Thus, through Lincoln's portrait and the related idea of his assassination Glaspell already foreshadows that this heritage was going to be hard to maintain. The fact that Lincoln's portrait still hangs on the wall of the Morton farm in

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<sup>5</sup> See Chapter 3, pp. 82- 84, 108- 122.

<sup>6</sup> For information about Abraham Lincoln's life, see Morris 2000. Morris details Lincoln's participation in the Black Hawk War and the rewards he obtained on p. 189.

<sup>7</sup> In Chapter 3 I have also discussed that Lincoln's portrait "is highly symbolic as it echoes the Civil War fought for the right of African Americans to be free members with a rightful place in American society" (117). As if Lincoln's effort to defend African Americans had fallen in a void, no African American character appears or is mentioned in this play, as seen earlier.

the subsequent acts, when the present characters have betrayed the pioneer ideas, becomes an ironic remark on the use of heritage. Lincoln's portrait is still there as if his ideals had not been erased.

Similarly, Glaspell places a portrait of Silas, the idyllic pioneer man, in the Morton library. After betraying Silas's dream of building a college open to everybody, a college "born of the fight for freedom" (132), in order to get money from the government, Felix Fejevary the Second and Senator Lewis paradoxically agree they are sustaining pioneer ideals. As if paying homage to Silas, his portrait hangs, romantically, among the stacks of books, the ones he regretted he did not have at home:

SENATOR: And this old boy (*turning to the portrait of SILAS MORTON*) can look out on his old home – and watch the valley grow.

FEJEVARY: Yes – that was my idea. His picture really should be in Memorial Hall, but I thought Uncle Silas would like to be up here among the books, and facing the old place. (*with a laugh*) I confess to being a little sentimental. (123)

Apparently, Silas's inheritors have taken into account not only his ideals, but also his preferences, such as his love for nature, and so they have chosen this particular location for his portrait. Nevertheless, at one point Glaspell makes us realise that Felix Fejevary the Second, who indeed was in Act I at the very birth of Silas's dream, is aware that he is not respecting that dream, neither is he living up to it: "Oh, our pioneer! If they could only see us now, and know what they did! (*FEJEVARY is silent; he does not look happy*)", says Senator Lewis (121). According to the stage direction, it seems that Felix realises that his pioneer ancestors could not rejoice about the way their ideals have been misappropriated. Even though Felix feels guilty about betraying the pioneers' dreams, he and the Senator agree on expelling those different characters, Hindu students, conscientious objectors, and other dissenters, from the college. They think that having Silas's portrait hanging on the library wall already justifies their respect for this pioneer. As Christine Dymkowsky has affirmed, the portrait of Silas Morton "is entirely appropriate and theatrically effective" (1988: 98). For the privileged location provided for Silas's portrait in the library makes him witness the onstage conversation between xenophobic and elitist Americans and the off-stage confrontation between the Hindu students, on one side, and Morton College students and the police, on the other.

In order to show the lie behind the onstage characters' alleged adherence to their heritage Glaspell employs an interesting dramatic technique; she makes them discuss the same topic, only to show how different their perspectives are.<sup>8</sup> In the opening act, Silas had found in Matthew Arnold the words to materialise his thoughts about life and education. Silas summarises what he thinks Morton College should become by quoting Arnold. Morton College was intended to bring "The best that has been thought and said in the world" (113). In sharp contrast, Glaspell suggests how far the present-time characters are from Silas's idealism in the way they handle Arnold's book. While holding Arnold's book in his hands, Horace affirms, "Matthew Arnold. My idea of nowhere to go for a laugh. When I wrote my theme on him last week he was so dry I had to go out and get a Morton Sundee" (124). And the use Doris and Fussie find for Arnold's book is as empty as Horace's. They use it to hide a love poem so that Eben Weeks finds it when he consults this book to write his essay. But worst of all is that with this poem these girls want to laugh at Eben. A book on the importance of culture and of knowing "the best that has been said and thought in the world" becomes a mere vehicle for teenagers' jokes. But Glaspell does not only employ Arnold's book to present the stupidity of puerile characters, but also the imbecility of the mature Senator Lewis, one of the "one-hundred-per-cent Americans" (128) and "rightful inheritors" (119). Glaspell makes Senator Lewis pursue "*Matthew Arnold with the conscious air of a half literate man reading a 'great book'*" (128). It could be argued that although Morton College library is crowded with books, these have materialised into one of Silas's fears, that books, instead of being used to make better people, are tools to merely show off and disguise "half" literacy: "It makes something of men – learning. A house that's full of books makes a different kind of people. Oh, of course, if the books aren't just to show off," says Silas Morton in Act I (111). When observing Arnold's book, Senator Lewis's mimics reveals him, a supposedly man of power and culture, as "half literate." Lewis's intention is to show off his culture, when he is not very cultivated, so pretending to read Arnold is just a pose.

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<sup>8</sup> Lincoln's speech, analysed in Chapter 3.4.1, pp. 114- 115, is relevant in this concern too. For as these "rightful inheritors" claim that "he was speaking in another age" and "terms change from generation to generation" they admit that their heritage is but a reconstruction of what they find appropriate to suit their convenience. Since they do not want to support the Hindu students, who have found in Lincoln's speech an ideological basis for their struggle, Senator Lewis, Horace and Felix Fejevary even disqualify Lincoln's discourse.



The misappropriation of these pioneers' ideals, represented spatially through Lincoln's and Silas's portraits, as well as through Matthew Arnold's book, adds up to the reversal of Silas's dream-like college. The ideals of peace and community, regardless of race, class and gender differences that Silas wanted for his college are corrupted. In Morton College, an institution created for "the boys of the cornfields- and the girls" (113), a college created for all of those who could not afford to go to Harvard; there is sexism, class elitism, and racism. All female characters, but Madeline, seem inferior to their male counterparts; they are objects of desire and/or delicate beings that require protection. According to Senator Lewis one can not expect much from women, because "Oh, well girls will be girls" (123). Moreover, he states that women must study just to be more appealing, "interesting", but never "peculiar the wrong way" (122). Class conflict is represented in the way some students, Horace Fejevary, Doris and Fussie, talk about Eben Weeks, a boy from the cornfields. They malign Eben when he fails to hand in his essay on Arnold because he had to plough (125), and Horace also adds, "We oughta – make it more unpleasant for some of those jays. Give the school a bad name," and "Too bad that class of people come here" (125). And, as seen in Chapter 3, Glaspell embodies the race conflict in the Hindu case and the absence of Native Americans and African Americans.

In spite of the pathetic way these characters deal with their past, these "rightful inheritors" agree that Madeline should be proud of her origins. However, in Madeline, Glaspell constructs a character aware of the dangers of the past, as long as the good things the past offers are sometimes reshaped for worse or kept in oblivion. Madeline is a victim of the place she lives in, because she is supposed to behave in a given way out of the respect she owes to her ancestors' place:

FEJEVARY: Madeline, have you no love for this place?

MADELINE: (*doggedly, after thinking*) Yes, I have. (*she sits down*) And I don't know why I have.

FEJEVARY: Certainly, it's not strange. If ever a girl had a background, Morton College is Madeline Fejevary Morton's background. (137- 138)

As Madeline later states, it is not her background that she rejects, but the fact that the ideals her ancestors defended, the ones presented in Act I, have become fossilised. Moreover, Madeline believes that tradition gone wrong is an entrapping form inherited

with the concept of family. Thus, Madeline claims, “It’s dreadful about families!” and “I hope I never have a family” (148). For the concept of family keeps one tied to society and forces compromises, as in the case of Professor Holden. Here Madeline attempts to break the spell of tradition gone wrong, as in the case of her family, by stating that she will never have one of her own, what also constitutes a reversal of the traditional roles of women as mothers and wives.

Glaspell brilliantly exemplifies the fossilisation of pioneers’ ideals in *Inheritors* in the case of Ira. Afraid “of the challenge of modern life” (Waterman 1966: 77), Madeline’s father suffers the burden of his past, as he is unable to evolve. A good example of this is found in the moment when, afraid that Madeline might be imprisoned, Ira claims: “There might be a fine, and they’d come down on me and take my land” (145). His sense of loyalty for his father and all his family had suffered as pioneers and Black Hawk War veterans, leads Ira to assert “I’ll not mortgage this farm! It’s been clear since the day my father’s father got it from the government – and it stays clear – till I’m gone. It grows the best corn in the state – best corn in the Mississippi Valley. Not for anything – you hear me? – would I mortgage this farm my father handed down to me” (143). Ira’s victimage of location also comes from the sense of duty he has imposed on himself in order to defend the material gains, the land, his family fought to possess. As Linda Ben-Zvi has suggested, “Pride in what a family stood for was one thing; pride in what it accumulated in material goods was something else” (2006: 279). This pride in material goods, in Ira’s case, means dramatic geopathology.

Completely opposed to her father’s self-imposed duty to defend his material heritage, Glaspell evinces Madeline’s rejection of her past in her denial to attend the celebrations on the fortieth anniversary of the foundation of the college that carries her name:

SENATOR: How do you do, Miss Morton. I suppose this is a great day for you.

MADELINE: Why – I don’t know.

SENATOR: The fortieth anniversary of the founding of your grandfather’s college? You must be very proud of your illustrious ancestor.

MADELINE: I get a bit bored with him.

SENATOR: Bored with him? My dear young lady!

MADELINE: I suppose because I've heard so many speeches about him – 'the sainted pioneer' – 'the grand old man of the prairies' – I'm sure I haven't any idea what he really was like [...]  
 SENATOR: I should think you would be proud to be the granddaughter of this man of vision.  
 MADELINE: (*her smile flashing*) Wouldn't you hate to be the granddaughter of a phrase? (126-127)

Madeline's witty remark that she is the granddaughter of just a phrase summarises Glaspell's standpoint about what happened to the old American ideals, the good traditions. They have come to mere phrases, nice quotations to show off. This issue is further emphasised by Ira, Madeline's father, who agrees that all the good intentions of the past have vanished and stood as words, never facts:

That's what the world is – all coming to nothing. My father used to sit there at the table and talk about the world – my father and her father. They thought 'twas all for something – that what you were went on into something more than you. That's the talk I always heard in this house. But it's just talk. The rare thing that came here was killed by the common thing that came here. Just happens – and happens cruel. (154)

Nevertheless, Madeline's rejection of tradition is not as complete as it could be extracted from the citations above, since Glaspell uses this character to portray the ideal that tradition may be positive. Madeline understands the real meaning of the College manifesto, her ancestors' beliefs, and is ready to fight for them, even physically. Madeline emerges as a legitimate spiritual inheritor of the pioneers. At this moment her surnames come alive with meaning. She is the daughter of Ira Morton and Madeline Fejevary. Significantly, her surnames swap places throughout the play. Out of the eight times her complete name is mentioned throughout the play, five times she is referred to as Madeline Morton Fejevary (122, 126, 130, 134), and three times as Madeline Fejevary Morton (list of Dramatis Personae, 126, 138). In the latter case, her name is her mother's, and as her mother did, Madeline does not hesitate to help immigrants, even putting at risk her own safety. The latter Madeline, as her mother did, chooses "brotherhood and community instead of self-interest" (Noe 1981: 82), and accepts the punishment for defending the Hindu students. Moreover, and contrasting with her uncle Felix Fejevary the Second, Madeline makes use of her immigrant past, for it is something to be proud of and to cherish. Glaspell shows this use of the past as Madeline eats from the precious "*old dish of coloured Hungarian glass*" she inherited from her

mother (142), while her uncle keeps his hidden in the cupboard. On the other hand, as Madeline Morton, she is as strong as Grandmother Morton and as idealistic as Silas.<sup>9</sup>

Glaspell makes a significant connection between Madeline and Native Americans that would reconcile the debt Silas also felt he had to them. Moreover, this connection comes to reach the Hindu students, standing for all immigrants. While both the Native Americans and the Hindu students were called “red,” the red candles and the red frosting on white frosting on Madeline’s birthday cake make a symbolic connection among them. She is the inheritor of them all, of their love for the American soil and their eagerness to fight for their rights. This is the beginning of her departure from victimage of location, to come to terms with her past and tradition, and to understand the good that tradition can be to her at present.

This section has focused on how Glaspell spatialises the past in the fictional onstage homes in *Close the Book* and *Inheritors*. This first section has exemplified the idea that characters use their pioneer heritage to shape their identities, and that the identity of heritage can be altered according to characters’ needs. Regarding victimage of location, we have seen the use Glaspell provides to heritage, as in its spatialisation it becomes a burden to those characters who cannot cope with the identity this heritage displays, as Jhansi in *Close the Book*, or how it has been transformed, as Madeline in *Inheritors*, or because, as in the case of Ira in the latter play, the maintenance of heritage triggers pathological isolation.

## **5.2 The Spatial Burden of the Pilgrim Fathers’ Heritage**

As Glaspell reworks the pioneer heritage in those plays set in the American Midwest, the portion of American history she reworks in those plays set in New England, *The Verge* and *The Comic Artist*, is interesting regarding the spatial presence of the Pilgrim Fathers’ heritage behind her characters, and the way this presence affects them regarding victimage of location.

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<sup>9</sup> Veronica Makowsky has also discussed how important both legacies are for the development of Madeline. See Makowsky 1993: 78.

In *The Verge*, given that Claire has endeavoured to deviate herself from given forms, the presence of the past is felt more linguistically than visually. J. Ellen Gainor has identified the relevance of the New England setting as far as heritage is concerned: “As a locus of patriarchy, no place in America reverberates with more sense of ‘fatherhood’ than New England. The Puritan founding fathers, shapers of American morality and ethos, are palpable presences for Claire, representing all she wishes to escape” (1989: 87). Claire has “great teachers and preachers behind,” and so she is told to “live up to the men [she] come[s] from” (75). Unlike the other characters, but Tom, what Claire wants is to fracture her heritage. Harry, for instance, cannot understand why Tom does not follow his family’s heritage:

HARRY: I must say I don’t get it. If you have a place – that’s the place for you to be. And he did have a place – best kind of family connections, and it was a very good business his father left him. Publishing business – in good shape, too, when old Edgeworthy died. (66)

Harry, representative of a traditional standpoint, believes that once that, due to heritage, one has a place, a good position, in society; there is no reason to try to change that. Harry’s statement is for stagnation in the places heritage provides, the kind of stagnation that makes Claire and Tom have a problem with the place to which their heritage has fixed them. Harry’s standpoint is strongly supported by Adelaide, Claire’s sister, who has found in her heritage the compass to direct her life and the life of Claire’s daughter:

ADELAIDE: There’s something about being in that main body, having one’s roots in the big common experiences, gives a calm which you have missed. That’s why I want you to take Elizabeth, forget yourself, and –

CLAIRE: I do want calm. But mine would have to be a calm I – worked my way to. A calm all prepared for me – would stink. (82)

Claire rejects the kind of calm that her heritage would provide, the calm of having a place, and a good one, in society. The calm coming from heritage, that calm “all prepared” for her, is another burden Claire wants to get rid of. In Act II, Adelaide and Claire confront each other again for the same reason. Adelaide is glad to have inherited an identity, and tells Claire to respect her heritage too:

ADELAIDE: You are really a particularly intelligent, competent person, it's time for you to call a halt to this nonsense and be the woman you were meant to be!

CLAIRE: (*holding the book up to see another way*) What inside dope have you on what I was meant to be?

ADELAIDE: I know what you came from.

CLAIRE: Well, isn't it about time somebody got loose from that? What I came from made you, so – [...] So – you being such a tower of strength, why need I to be imprisoned in what I came from?

ADELAIDE: It isn't being imprisoned. Right there is where you made your mistake, Claire. Who's in a tower – an unsuccessful tower? Not I. I go about in the world – free, busy, happy. Among people, I have no time to think of myself. [...] My family. The things that interest her; from morning till night it's – (79- 80)

This dialogue displays the main features of how the past can be part of a character's geopathology. Adelaide affirms that Claire should be "what she was meant to be"; suggesting that identity mainly comes from heritage. Claire, as Adelaide, should respect the traditional morality and ethos her Puritan ancestors established. Claire, on the contrary, shapes her identity in opposition to heritage, getting "loose from" heritage, a concept that "imprison[s.]" It is interesting to note that in the dialogue above the figure of the tower appears here again as an image representing tradition. Adelaide is a "tower of strength," in the same manner that Claire's traditional daughter is "a tower that is a tower" (79), and in contrast to Claire's "thwarted tower."

Glaspell also shows Claire's disgust for the entrapping concept she thinks heritage constitutes through her rejection of traditional forms of art. While arguing with Adelaide about the role heritage should have in shaping one's identity, Claire has a book in her hands. This is a book of Blake's drawings (81). This book is very meaningful, because in his drawings Blake rejected Naturalism. Blake experimented with new forms and provided different angles from which to look at his work, stark deviations from traditional art. Claire turns the book "*to see another way*" (79), symbolising how she wants to look at things from different angles and to find new ways of expression. As it could not be otherwise, Adelaide also prefers traditional art. She recommends Claire, "You'd better look at the Sistine Madonna" (81). Regarding heritage, the meaning of the Sistine Madonna, painted by Raphael c. 1518, stands as an epitome of traditional painting, the kind of art Claire repudiates. Glaspell also suggests Claire's deviation from heritage relating to art through Claire's divorce from her first

husband, “a stick-in-the-mud artist” (69), that is, a painter who only created realistic portraits, and she has chosen Dick, a modernist painter, as a lover.

While in *The Verge*, as in *Close the Book* and *Inheritors*, Glaspell argues that heritage can become a negative feature leading to her protagonists’ victimage of location, in *The Comic Artist* heritage is spatialised in order to show a character’s positive eagerness to come back to and to keep her roots. The set is described as follows, “*The house is two hundred years old. Walls are panelled, the fireplace is large. For the most part the furniture is old American, but there has been no attempt at ‘period’ so the house has not the atmosphere of a museum*” (9). The “old American” pieces of furniture are a small and a larger table, a walnut horse-hair sofa, two or three Windsor armchairs, and a plain, full-length couch (9). The past here does not seem a burden, nor a matter of pride, but something to give a “sense of identity” and “security” to one’s life (Noe 1981: 83). Moreover, since it has not “*the atmosphere of a museum*,” this seems a nice place to live in. Eleanor consciously wanted to move here as a sharp contrast to the life she had in New York:

ELEANOR: My people were here long ago. They built this house in seventeen hundred and something. I feel my great-grandfather in the old forgotten roads, on the beach. [...] He lingers in things he made or touched, in my own imagination ... He is in me. After long, home-sick wandering – in other countries, in New York – he has returned. (13)

Eleanor’s return to her ancestors’ house seems to be her contribution to her great-grandfather’s rest. For her, this place provides the peace she wants to grant her great-grandfather and the peace she wants for herself and her family after the Bohemian life they had in New York. But moving to this old house was not enough, so Eleanor endeavours to get all the old things that were in the house before:

ELEANOR: I never felt at home in New York. I was born and brought up there, but I never took root. [...] Stephen was tired of cities, too. The country drew us together, as the country can when you’re in the city, so I said: ‘Let’s look up the old place on the Cape.’ It had been sold to Portuguese, but we bought it back. They made us pay for it, too. Now, as we can afford it, we’re buying back old things that were in it. [...] When I discover an old tool, they seem in life again. I hope Wallops will like the place, and want it for his children. Perhaps not. He may want to live in Chicago. [...] Anyway, I owed it to the place itself. Particularly at this time of the year, I know I belong here. (*She takes beach-plums from the basket, examines,*

*and puts them in the kettle.*) I like to go out and find the things that grew all through the times the land was alone. I like bringing them into the house and doing the same old things. *(Letting them fall from her hands unexamined, her hands resting on the sides of the kettle. Pushing it from her.)* But now I'm a little tired of the beach-plums. (56- 57)

Eleanor's speech is very important regarding heritage, its spatial representation and the role it has in forging a character's identity. It is interesting to note that Eleanor was born and raised in New York, but since she "never took root," it could be said that there is not a biological attachment to places because of birth or just having been raised there. It is a distant heritage, that of Eleanor's great-grandfather, that appeals to her and that shapes her identity. And it is then that Eleanor, in order to create and maintain an identity, buys the old house where her ancestors had lived, and endeavours to get back all the belongings that once were in the house, regaining thus the identity the house once had.<sup>10</sup> And then, regarding the idea that identity is constituted through performative acts enacted in given places,<sup>11</sup> Eleanor reinforces her link to her heritage, her identity and her house, by repeating the same acts her ancestors allegedly performed there, "doing the same old things" "in the house". Before her previous utterance takes place, we have seen Eleanor at work, taking beach-plums and letting them fall into a kettle. She "*has an old-fashioned wooden potato-masher*" with which she crushes the beach-plums (55). These performative acts have created a very strong link between the house and Eleanor: "I owed it to the place itself" and "I know I belong here," she says. But as the ending of the quotation above highlights, there is something wrong, as Eleanor begins to feel tired. This could be considered an omen of the invasion Eleanor's house is to go through, when Luella and Nina attempt to destroy Eleanor's house, in some ways, by destroying Eleanor's heritage, as discussed later on.

Turning to Eleanor's love for old things, Glaspell employs two stage props to signify this character's attachment to heritage: a lantern and a jar. Karl and Eleanor talk about the lantern in the following terms,

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<sup>10</sup> There is an amazing similitude between Eleanor's recreation of her heritage in her house and Glaspell's friend Mary Heaton Vorse's words: "As I am the sum of generations, so is my house. In its shape and its furnishing it tells how the people of New England lived many years ago" (1991: 33). It might be possible that Glaspell modelled Eleanor on her friend Mary.

<sup>11</sup> See Chapter 2 "Towards Dramatic Geopathology" for the link between Judith Butler's theory on performativity and its usefulness for the present research on dramatic geopathology, pp. 55- 56.



KARL: (*sitting down and examining it.*) This is a curious old lantern.

ELEANOR: An old ship's lantern. It was here in the barn. I think it belonged to my great-grandfather.

KARL: Then it sent its light into some pretty stormy places, didn't it?

ELEANOR: There does seem something valiant about the good old thing.

KARL: (*who is still leaning into the light of it, examining.*) It was good – your coming back to this old place. (56)

As she did with the old potato-masher, Eleanor also uses the old lantern, a lantern that belonged to her sailor great grandfather. The dialogue above draws a relationship between the past and how it provides value to the present. The old lantern showed the way to the ship, in the same manner that Eleanor's coming back to the house, to her past, was aimed to give her life a sense, to find her roots and fix her identity. The old lantern and the past provide light to find the way. Moreover, Eleanor has assumed the symbolic role of the old lantern, sending light to stormy places, that is, guiding Karl and Stephen in difficult moments. In the following scene Karl is lost outside, a little afraid of darkness, until Eleanor shows him the way home with her lantern. She becomes the light for Karl, trying to help him:

KARL: It's tremendous down there [on the beach] as night comes. Makes one a little afraid. [...] And walking up this old sand road, through tall grasses blowing in the mist. It was nice to see your lantern, like a little circle of safety in the strange night. Or is it you, Eleanor?

ELEANOR: Me?

KARL: Makes that circle. (56)

This scene is highly symbolic. Karl's loss of his husband role with Nina reflects in spatial terms in his fear of darkness and his state of loss in the darkness. Eleanor, who has apparently rooted her identity as wife and mother, and who seems to enjoy topophilia, appears with her lantern to symbolically save Karl. She makes "a little circle of safety." Similarly, she also used to be a metaphorical lantern guiding Stephen's life:

STEPHEN: Don't know what I would have done if I hadn't just met you, Eleanor. You made another world. It was – from another place in life (24)

LUELLA: Stephen doesn't take care of anybody. [...] Do you know why? [...] Because Eleanor entirely surrounds him, because she takes care of him – sees that he is fed and clothed and bathed, that he isn't afraid at night. [...] If she didn't make a safe place for him to be brave in, he'd play anything to shut out his loneliness and his uncertainty. (71)

The displaced character of Luella sees how Eleanor attempts to pass her topophilia on to Stephen, by “surround[ing] him,” by giving him “another place in life,” a place that Eleanor has trusted in her ancestors to build.

Glaspell, however, complicates Eleanor’s topophilia, for what was seen as Eleanor’s positive quality, her love for her heritage which would give her sense of and peace in life, becomes the spark the displaced characters will use to symbolically destroy Eleanor’s home. Glaspell symbolises the destruction of Eleanor’s past, as an attack on her identity, through the breaking of an old jar. In Act II scene 1, Eleanor is modelling with a jar she cherishes.<sup>12</sup> After she leaves the stage, Nina is willing to occupy her place, as a model and as Stephen’s lover.<sup>13</sup> As he rejects her, Nina “*in one quick, sweeping movement seizes ELEANOR’s jar from the floor, raises it with both hands high above her head, and with all her strength throws it at STEPHEN. It smashes against the wall with a loud noise*” (52). The breaking of Eleanor’s jar symbolises how her house is being torn down by Nina. The jar is a piece she loved (“I love the feeling of this jug” (39)), the embodiment of her past:

STEPHEN: We’ll get another.

ELEANOR: You can’t get another. It had always been here. It belonged here. (54- 55)

The conjunction of prop and place, that the jar belonged to here, is explicitly revealed. The old jar cannot be replaced, because it had its meaning, its sense of past. Invaders dismantle Eleanor’s effort to keep the roots of her house and her family strongly fixed to the earth. In this sense, the past is a burden on Eleanor because she has to struggle against almost all the other characters to defend her belief in tradition, a burden that, as she says later, makes her feel “a little tired” (57).

Thus, it could be said that Glaspell also employs the Founding Fathers’ heritage to show how this can serve theatrically and dramatically as an element configuring victimage of location. Either linguistically, as in the case of *The Verge*, or spatially and symbolically as in *The Comic Artist*, we see the roles Glaspell provides to the Pilgrim

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<sup>12</sup> Glaspell and Matson refer to the object Eleanor poses with as “jug” and “jar” alternatively.

<sup>13</sup> Nina’s invasion and desire to occupy Eleanor’s place has been discussed regarding this scene in Chapter 3.2.1, see pp. 100- 101.

Fathers' heritage regarding the shaping of her characters' identity. *The Comic Artist* is an especial case, because in this play Glaspell also shows how heritage may be a problem represented in spatial terms when other characters cannot accept that heritage or use it to attack another character. This section has advanced a significant issue discussed in depth in the following section, the crossroads of place, identity and heritage in performative acts.

### **5.3 Geopathic Crossroads: Place, Identity, and Tradition in Performative Acts.**

This section analyses the theatrical means Glaspell employs to show the interplay between place, identity and tradition in two of her plays, *Alison's House* and *Chains of Dew*. The previous sections and chapters have already argued that social roles, strongly rooted in tradition, influences the arising of victimage of location in some of Glaspell's characters, for instance, female characters who reject their maternal role, such as Claire in *The Verge*. The present section understands "tradition" in a broader sense, focusing on those families in Glaspell's plays that have a "place" in society. That is, families that, though not of Pioneers' or Pilgrim Fathers' ancestry, have an important role in society as guardians of heritage and tradition.

In his early analysis of *Alison's House*, Sievers claims that "the general theme is the return of the past" (1955: 71). It could be said that, due to Glaspell's configuration of the onstage library of the Stanhopes' homestead, the past has never left. Indeed, this library seems to be frozen in the past. It is described as "*the room of people who have lived in comfortable circumstances and signifies a family of traditions and cultivation*" (653). As in *Close the Book*, the intellectual and social status of the family is materialised onstage through books and portraits. There are volumes by Keats, Shelley, Spencer and Shakespeare; and the portraits are "*of an older generation*" (653). The sense that the Stanhopes feel great pride of their past and tradition evinces as well in the kind of furnishings that crowd the room. While the play opens in the morning of the last day of the nineteenth century, "*The furnishings of the library are of a period earlier than this*" (653). Besides this visual assertion about the importance of tradition in this place, Glaspell verbalises this idea through one of the characters: Louise. She refers to the house: "So roomy, and well built. And such *traditions*" (673, author's emphasis), and "The place has been in the family from the first" (674). Louise's words establish the

close link between the Stanhopes as a family, their house, their heritage and their tradition; all apparently “well built.”

Unlike *Close the Book*, where the library was traditional but cheerful due to Glaspell’s use of light, in *Alison’s House* the room is gloomy. As seen earlier, Glaspell treats the issue of heritage as a burden in a comic manner in *Close the Book*; while this issue receives a more serious treatment in *Alison’s House*, where respect to heritage and tradition can be identified as the source of pain, sorrow and even deaths. Thus, Glaspell’s use of lighting and colour are determinant in this concern. In *Alison’s House* the curtains covering the bay window on the rear wall are “old plum-colored velvet,” and the room is carpeted in a tone deeper than the curtains (653). Certainly, the curtains point to the family economic status, since velvet is an expensive sort of fabric, and to its past, given that the curtains are “old.” But the opaqueness of velvet prompts negative connotations. The darkness the curtains provide is heightened by the carpeted floor, which is even darker, giving this place an obscure atmosphere.

As the Stanhopes get ready to move out of the house, there is certain disorder in this library too, a factor Chaudhuri also points out to detect dramatic geopathology.<sup>14</sup> In *Alison’s House*, throughout Acts I and II, the characters work together to “tear up” this room also, packing books and the tea china. Significantly, as the characters dismember the room, Glaspell makes them waver between a feeling of happiness and relief for dismantling the house, and a strange remorse for breaking up their past as they do so. For instance, in Act II Stanhope is revising some papers and burning them. Eben comes with a box of old newspapers:

EBEN: Shall we keep these?

STANHOPE: Where?

EBEN: I don’t know. I think they ought to stay right here. That everything should stay where it is.

STANHOPE: Don’t start that again. Don’t you think it’s harder for me than you? I was born here. Grew up here.

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<sup>14</sup> This is one of the instances in Glaspell’s plays where the onstage place is disordered. Other examples are *Trifles*, with Minnie’s disordered kitchen, *Suppressed Desires*, with Henrietta’s books on the floor, and *The People*, where the office is also completely disordered. Minnie’s and Henrietta’s cases are argued elsewhere in this thesis, while *The People* does not seem to provide the ground for a discussion on dramatic geopathology. Thus, though there seems to be some consistency concerning Glaspell’s theatrical use of disorder to show a problem with place, this issue is not developed on its own in this thesis.

EBEN: That's why. And Alison.

STANHOPE: And Agatha. She can't be left here any longer. You can see that now. And she won't go while we keep the place. Too bad we got that fire out. (666)

Whereas Eben feels that everything should be left as it was, as a reminder of their past, Stanhope understands that this is really pathological for Agatha, as her trying to burn the house down later demonstrates. Stanhope wants to release his sister from that burden. This idea appears again when the Hodges say they will re-decorate the house, put in partitions, and so on:

EBEN: They'll destroy it.

STANHOPE: I want it destroyed [...] I care for it so much I don't want – itself, to go to some one else. (670)

That is, Stanhope depends so much on the idea of the family past, that before seeing other people living in the house that represents his heritage, he prefers to see the house destroyed. It could be said that Stanhope's statement is due to everything he and his family have already left behind in order to protect their tradition. Accepting that their old house, representing their identity, may pass on to another family makes Stanhope question the futility of their efforts. Moreover, their house is going to be used as a summer residence, where people will come to enjoy and relax, contradicting the Stanhopes' identity of self-sacrifice to maintain their status in society.<sup>15</sup>

In *Chains of Dew* Glaspell provides what is probably one of the main verbalisations of the geopathic crossroads between place, identity and tradition. In the following dialogue between Dotty and Mother, Glaspell suggests her point that identity is utterly influenced by tradition and social environment, and reaffirmed through performativity, understood as the repetition of every day, and socially accepted, activities:

DOTTY: Do you think, mother, that it's hard to be any other way than the way you are?

MOTHER: Well, I suppose that depends on just how you are.

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<sup>15</sup> In previous chapters I have discussed the sacrifices of this family to keep their place in society. In Chapter 3 I have argued that Eben, Stanhope and Ted are tied to their family (91- 92), that Agatha becomes a prisoner of the house in her attempt to protect the honour of the family (147- 149) and that Alison never left the estate for the same reason (155- 156).

DOTTY: Don't you think sometimes you are as you are –because you've been that way? (*Holds the doll at arm's length*) And you've been that way – well because you are supposed to be that way. When you do certain things – bridge and dancing – then you're the kind of person who plays bridge and dances. But what sort of person would you be – if you did something else?

MOTHER: I've sometimes wondered myself.

DOTTY: You know, it's an exciting idea – that you needn't be as you are. (II, 1, 13- 14)

For Dotty it is evident that her identity is based on the repetition of her daily acts. Born to a wealthy and traditional family, married to Seymore, the vestry man, Dotty has been raised respecting traditions. She is now a traditional grown-up woman, mainly because she does what traditional women of her status usually do. When in Act II we see her at home, she is performing the role of the dutiful wife; behaving as if she were her husband's servant. She answers the phone and fetches Seymore a foot stool so that he is at ease, while she sits in a lower chair, a symbolic extension of her subjugation to Seymore. Besides home, the places she goes to, and which her husband and society approve of for her, are the Monday Lunch Club, the Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday bridge, dinner at Elmhurst, and Verder's tea (II, 1, 1). Dotty's victimage of location is latent in her realisation that she is caught in a traditional rhythm of life that does not but enhance her traditionalism. She is confined to places that do not but contribute to the performance of her traditional identity: the upper-class woman, married to a vestry man, who only receives women from the upper-class at her home, and who goes to other places where other traditional women gather. As Blossom in *Ambrose Holt and Family*, the novel version of this play, "she did just what was expected of her, as if all the affairs of her life, her own room, had been arranged by others, and the place where she was expected to move was the only place for her. What more could a girl have asked? But she had wanted something more, she could not have said what" (1931: 62).

In *Chains of Dew* Seymore does his part in keeping Dotty tied to traditional places and performing only those acts which suit her social status. Above all, he wants his wife to stay as she is now, like a child he has to protect. He calls her Dotty Dimple, her childhood pet name, and talks about her in the following terms: "The things she grew up in. I – at no little personal sacrifice – have kept her in these things. [...] She is a child – and I have not asked her to be anything else" (II, 2, 14- 15, author's emphasis).

In a similar way, in *Ambrose Holt and Family*, Harriette, the protagonist, is called Blossom, Kitten, or Doll instead, “But she was not a flower, or a kitten, or a doll; she was a woman who thought and felt. She had never succeeded in making anyone else know this; it must be her fault” (1931: 11). In *Chains of Dew* Seymore cannot accept his wife’s interest in modern poetry, because this would take her far from tradition. This is also the reason why Seymore is appalled by the arrival of his modern New York friends, because they could show Dotty that there is another world different from tradition, an “exciting” one, as Dotty wonders in the quotation above.

Glaspell also makes Mother experience the intersection among place, identity and tradition. The first time Mother appears onstage she seems to follow the image of a traditional woman. When Act II opens, Glaspell associates some pieces of furniture and stage properties with Mother to suggest this traditionalism. The sewing chair, the work table and the twin dolls on it stand for Mother’s main occupation, reinforced by the fact that when she first appears she sits down in her chair and takes one of the dolls, ready to work. And for the moment, it seems that she is going to be a sweet, quiet, and traditional old woman. However, as the play develops, it is evident that this approach to Mother echoes the way Seymore has presented her in Act I and how he wants her to be, but that, as in the case of Dotty, it has nothing to do with what these women really want to do and to be, as Mother is quite a rebellious character.

In keeping with Seymore’s wish to retain Dotty in the things she grew up in, he is also eager to accommodate Mother to what he thinks is the best situation for her: “Mother lives with us, and after her long faithful life I confess I do like to give her the kind of home she wants. She only knows those simple times in which she grew up – and old. She’s too contented to touch” (I, 16- 17). As with Dotty, Seymore has not stopped to think what his Mother really wants, and he endeavours to keep her in “a peaceful resting place after her long life” (II, 2, 6), a kind of home that, as Nora points out, “Sounds like a cemetery” (II, 2, 6). Nevertheless, Mother’s open embrace to the modernity Nora brings to the house, the promotion of birth control in Bluff City, and the fact that Mother also has a try to see how a bob would suit her, reveals how wrong Seymore is. Indeed, Kristina Hinz-Bode has identified a comic pun on Seymore’s name: “see” “more” (2006b: 132). Seymore thinks he has some kind of superior wisdom in comparison to those characters surrounding him, while the truth is that he should “see

more,” because he is unable to see the truth behind his mother and his wife. Glaspell shows this issue through Seymore’s interpretation of his mother’s dolls, for he is not even able to realise that Mother’s dolls mean much more than her traditional commitment to do things for others, as in her old pioneer days:

SEYMORE: Pitiful little attempts to be staunch to her own thing! (*He picks up the doll which looks like him*) A doll. Dolls the children love, here among this – (*indicates the birth control exhibit*) Doesn’t it at all get you?

DOTTY: I think you’ve got the wrong [dope], Seymore.

SEYMORE: I think I know my mother. (III, 11)

These dolls, which Mother has been sewing for the Church Bazaar for a long time, turn up later to be Mother’s witty and silent comment of the identity of those around her. Mother’s disregard for those around her is shown in the dolls she carefully sews. Thus, this activity does not reflect the peaceful old lady making dolls for a church bazaar, but a silent, and angry, comment on people she cannot stand.<sup>16</sup>

The way both Mother and Dotty ally to rebel against tradition, by changing the configuration of the room, their own identities, by performing different activities, shows on the one hand, that place, heritage and tradition can form a geopathic crossroad, and on the other hand, that this geopathology can be avoided, at least momentarily, by behaving differently. When she faces modernity, Dotty realises that “There are too many vital things in our lives to keep repeating tiresome things” (III; 7), and so she changes her traditional performativity drastically. Dotty dismisses all her former friends, putting an end to the Monday Lunch club and the like, she accepts instead being the president of the Birth control league in her area, and she has her hair bobbed. Mother, in turn, will help Nora display her birth control propaganda and make dolls for birth control as well.

A very interesting issue regarding the interplay among place, tradition, and performativity is that through Dotty Glaspell shows that Dotty’s new identity and new performativity also require a place. As a matter of contrast to Dotty’s no-place, Glaspell presents onstage Seymore’s place of his own. It is not a matter of coincidence that

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<sup>16</sup> Mother’s dolls constitute her principle of departure, and as such this is analysed in depth in Chapter 7.5, pp. 343- 346.



Glaspell provides Seymore; the character who says that he has a problem with place, with a room of his own, another clue to reconsider Seymore's geopathology. Seymore has a studio, and Glaspell forces the audience to keep this in mind throughout Acts II and III, since the door leading to this studio is on the rear wall of the stage. Seymore uses this place to "abut himself" (II, 1, 12), to write his poems and to take refuge from what happens in the library. In this manner, his discourse on his house being a prison for him loses strength again, when we discover that he has a place where he can be himself freely, a privilege nobody else has in this play, and even less Dotty. Besides, Glaspell employs Seymore's studio to reflect upon gender politics in terms of space. It could be said that given that Seymore has a room of his own, Glaspell posits here the question of Dotty's necessity to have a room of her own too. Glaspell shows how the new Dotty, the one all changed after Nora's arrival, also acknowledges her need for a place of her own, a place to work quietly. Dotty invites Nora and O'Brien to go "upstairs" to work on their speech for birth control: "Why don't we go upstairs? Where we won't be disturbed. (*Noting Seymore*) Or – won't disturb. [...] Well, shall we stay here? (*Firmly*) No. Let us go where we will be uninterrupted" (III, 22). It is important to highlight that in Dotty's remarks about place she is recognising that she finds her work more or at least equally important to that of her husband, while before Seymore's work was her main concern. As she finishes with "Let us go where we will not be interrupted", she implies that birth control is now more important than her husband's poetry, and personal and social needs, and she shows this in spatial terms. At this stage in the play, it seems Glaspell provides a happy resolution for dramatic geopathic, but this solution is only temporal. How Glaspell complicates dramatic geopathology in *Chains of Dew*, when these female characters realise that in fulfilling their identity they are destroying Seymore, is considered later in this thesis.

To sum up, it could be said that Glaspell's negative conception of the past and tradition is linked to the way they become a burden for some characters, as it is the past and tradition which to a great extent provide and tend to fix roles. Characters are expected to behave in certain ways, to carry on their traditional performative acts, because of the families they come from and because they are either men or women. The next section briefly focuses on the conflict of generation arising from the struggle between those characters linked to the past and given roles, and those who want to subvert these patterns.

#### 5.4 Tradition vs. Modernity: Generation Conflicts Reflected Onstage

Generational conflict is a very precise configuration of the more general theme of family or tradition as a key factor in dramatic geopathology. And this conflict, indeed, is used by Glaspell to spatialise her most radical ideas about social and family roles vs. the struggle of the individual to be free from these ties. As said earlier, the generation conflict is a common theme many modern American playwrights employ as a device to set their plays in motion.<sup>17</sup> The aims of this section place Glaspell within this tradition, reflecting on the way generational conflicts and dramatic geopathology relate in her plays. Moreover, the analysis of how the generation conflict is staged in Glaspell's plays will demonstrate that Glaspell's interest in this issue began very early, and that she exploited its dramatic possibilities in her early plays, and not exclusively in *The Comic Artist*, *Alison's House* and *Springs Eternal*, as J. Ellen Gainor has stated.<sup>18</sup> Family and the generational conflict have always been Glaspell's focus.

A first interesting typology within generational conflicts enacted in space and contributing thus to dramatic geopathology originates in the confrontation between two opposed kinds of women: the True Woman vs. the New Woman. Succinctly, the True Woman is characterised by domesticity and submissiveness.<sup>19</sup> She defends traditional Victorian values, i. e. motherhood, women's subjugation to men, women's position inside the house and, by extension, within the moral frameworks established by society. Glaspell usually marks visually this kind of character with a traditional look, as are the cases of Mabel in *Suppressed Desires*, Clara Root in *Close the Book*, Aunt Isabel in *Inheritors*, Mrs. MacIntyre in *Chains of Dew*, Laura in *Bernice*, Adelaide in *The Verge*, Agatha and Louise in *Alison's House*, and Eleanor in *The Comic Artist*. Moreover, Glaspell also places a character visually marked as a New Woman confronting any of these True Women. Though it is hard to find a unitary definition of the New Woman or even an agreed date of birth of the "New Woman," which ranges from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment in the United States; Elizabeth Ammons has provided a definition of the New Woman that seems to account for the different varieties there may be:

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<sup>17</sup> See Chapter 2, pp. 71- 72.

<sup>18</sup> See Gainor 2001: 235.

<sup>19</sup> For more information about the True Woman see for instance Noe 2002: 158.

There was not one New Woman at the turn of the century but a number of New Women. These models agreed on some fundamentals, such as belief in female self-determination. But they diverged greatly on other fundamentals, such as awareness of racism, class bias, oppression of women by women, the drawbacks of sexual revolution for women, and the danger of individualism as a prime human value [...T]he fact that only one of these models, the middle-class white ideal of the New Woman – usually highly individualistic and frequently unaware of, or at least unconcerned about, racism, class discrimination, and her own exploitation and oppression of other women, especially women of color – became the most popularised version of the figure during the Progressive Era and has since been enshrined as the New Woman of the period, should give us a pause. (1991: 95)

While Glaspell does not cover all these models of the New Woman in her plays, and they are all white and Anglo-Saxon, the present section shows how her New Women vary. The main aspect that unites Glaspell's New Women characters is their opposition to True Women characters and to male characters who defend Victorianism. For this analysis it is also interesting to bear in mind Glaspell's own definition of the New Woman, for the features displayed here underline her dramatic heroines. Writing for the *Weekly Outlook* in 1896, Glaspell gives some clues to become a New Woman:

First ... you must be ... clever; you need not be pretty, but you must be bright, vivacious, interesting. You are not expected to spend your life buried in an encyclopedia or a treatise on the origin of Man, but ... be able to talk with intelligence and wit on anything from the penal laws of Russia to the latest production in farce comedy line. You must have sufficient resources within yourself not to be afflicted with *ennui* every time there is no man in sight, and when the man does come into view, you must stand ready to cope with him on his own grounds rather than docilely and demurely wait for him to fill your ears with pretty nothings. (qtd. in Ben-Zvi 2005: 33)

Glaspell's New Woman character is often talkative, learned, intelligent, and what is most significant, unafraid of men or men's territories: "you must be ready to cope with him on his own grounds," says Glaspell. Besides the features seen above, Glaspell's New Woman also follows the paradigm Lois Rudnick offers, for this scholar, the New Woman is "a conflicted figure," because Victorianism still casts a heavy burden on this kind of woman, but she could be defined as "having the attributes of independence, self-definition, physical adeptness, and mental acuity, qualities that allowed her to work, play, study, volunteer, and socialize with equal aplomb" (1991: 73).

Before dealing in depth with the confrontation between different generations of women in Glaspell's plays and their relevance for dramatic geopathology, I would like to point out briefly how Glaspell presents most of the different kinds of female characters that appear in her plays in the one-act *Woman's Honor*. All the female characters in this play are related to place, since they behave accordingly to their places in society, and, furthermore, they gather in another place, the sheriff's house, to solve Gordon Wallace's victimage of location, in order to release him from jail, to provide him with *departure*. In contrast to the male characters in the play, who do have a name, Mr. Foster; the lawyer, and Gordon Wallace, the prisoner charged with murder, Glaspell combines Realism and Expressionism as her six female characters are devoid of any name. They are types named after their role. While it has been said that taken "together, these figures' behavior comes to represent a composite portrait – albeit a virtual caricature – of women in the early twentieth-century society who are trying to fulfil their culture's expectations of them" (Gainor 2001: 84), all these female characters stand for different and separate individuals. And the knot that ties them together is their willingness to lie and say they were the ones who spent the night of 25<sup>th</sup> October with Gordon Wallace to save him from jail.

Glaspell employs her female characters' willingness to lie in *Woman's Honor* to question these women's acceptance of the place they have in society, since, as Marcia Noe claims, this lie makes them "be viewed as unchaste", locating themselves far from the ideal of feminine virtuosity (2002: 156). The Motherly One stands for the pure True Woman to some extent. She is "in the habit of trying to save lives" (136), and as she would like other women to save her own children if they were in danger, she wants to save Gordon Wallace. The Shielded One is a woman tired of being shielded by men throughout her life, so this is the reason why she has come to say that she is the unfaithful and fallen woman who was with Gordon the night he is charged of having committed a murder:

SHIELDED ONE: I speak for all the women of my – [*Hesitates*] under-world. All those smothered under men's lofty sentiments toward them! I wish I could paint for you the horrors of the shielded life. [*Says 'shielded' as if it were 'shameful.'*] I know you would feel something must be done to save us. After all [*Growing a little wild*] are we not your sisters? Our honor has been saved so many times. We are tired. (146)

It is possible that Glaspell modelled this archetypal character on Katie, the protagonist of her 1911 novel *The Visioning*. Katie feels that being shielded has kept her away from life: “shielded from life. And now she was beginning to feel that that same shielding had kept her from knowledge of life, understanding of it [...] the vague feeling that perhaps the greatest danger of all was in being too safe” (145). Similarly, the Cheated One in *Woman’s Honor* is also tired of being shielded, what she equals to being cheated: “I’ve been cheated. Cheated out of my chance to have a man I wanted by a man who would have what he wanted. Then he saved my woman’s honor. Married me and cheated me out of my life. I’m just something to be cheated” (154). So saving Gordon is “the first thing I ever wanted to do that I’ve done” (154). The Shielded One and the Cheated One represent those women who are tired of being seen as True Women, and who want to make their own decisions instead, breaking the rules of respectability inherent to the patriarchal cage they are trapped in.

The Scornful One and the Mercenary One are far from True Women, though they could hardly be called New Women. The Mercenary One appears to do business. She would gladly accept being Gordon’s alibi for money: “A business proposition is a business proposition. What a man needs and can pay for –” (143). The Scornful One claims she has been living without any honour since she was seventeen, so she does not mind sacrificing to save a man’s life. More importantly, the Scornful One appears to develop the main theme of *Woman’s Honor*, namely, that a woman’s honour depends on men, and by extension, that a woman’s identity, and a woman’s place, also depend on them. In *The Visioning* Glaspell had also taken this issue to the front, presenting the ideals of chivalry and honour as men’s obsessions that do but spoil women’s lives, labelling them “false standards” (358). In *Woman’s Honor* The Scornful One wonders, “Did it ever strike you as funny that woman’s honor is only about one thing, and that man’s honor is about everything but that thing?” (134). And her wonder makes the others question “What is woman’s honor?” And they resume that it is just “A thing men talk about,” “A safe corner,” “A star to guide them,” and also a “vice for them” (144-145). In this manner, the one issue that seems to be pivotal for these women’s identity depends totally on men and it is only of interest for men too. J. Ellen Gainor believes that, “Glaspell reveals the patriarchal constructs underlying the convention; honor, like other aspects of women’s identity, is a male creation foisted upon women but one that they accept begrudgingly or even embrace unquestioningly within male-dominated

society” (2001: 85). As seen in other sections of this thesis, many are the men in Glaspell’s plays that in one way or another want to model their women to be a safe corner and a guiding star, to stand as True Women independently of their needs and wishes, to be tied to one place, independent of where these women want to stand. And the way these female characters argue to be the one to save Gordon, reveals, beyond a generational conflict, a role conflict, and which on the whole, and through comedy, reflects women’s need to have their own place, physical and metaphorical.

The generational conflict Glaspell dramatises in some of her plays regarding exclusively her female characters establishes opposed sets of characters, New Women, vs. their antagonists, True Women. As discussed at different points of this thesis, there are some clear cases of confrontation: in *Suppressed Desires*, Mabel wants to occupy Henrietta’s place in Stephen’s life, that is, she wants to become his wife. Clara Root in *Close the Book* cannot accept that the modern outsider Jhansi is inside her house, her family and her social circle. Aunt Isabel in *Inheritors* tries to convince Madeline to stay within the family, society, and her heritage. In *Chains of Dew* Mrs. MacIntyre attempts to defend Dotty’s traditional house by verbally expelling the New Woman Nora from Bluff City. Laura confronts Margaret in *Bernice*, because Margaret is an independent New Woman; single, childless, and free to move, what according to Laura disqualifies her as a real woman. Adelaide reproaches Claire the same crimes in *The Verge*, urging her to return to her heritage, and her roles of dutiful wife and loving mother. Agatha and Louise in *Alison’s House* cannot accept Elsa’s liberty, going away with a married man, and then they do not want her inside the house; and finally, Eleanor is in sharp contrast with the cheeky Nina in *The Comic Artist*, who has appeared to break the tranquillity of Eleanor’s house.

Glaspell’s opposition between New Woman vs. True Woman is not, nonetheless, simplistic, reflecting Ammon’s point that there are “a number of New Women” (1991: 95). According to Marcia Noe there are two kinds of New Woman in Glaspell’s *oeuvre*: “strong, independent women who forswear lovers and family for self-actualization or principle [...] and comic characters who interrogate radical notions and unconventional ideas about women” (2002: 153). For instance, regarding comic characters, Jhansi in *Close the Book*, though claiming her outsider status, finally remains inside the Roots’ house and within society. And then, the stronger New Women characters in Glaspell’s

plays, such as Claire in *The Verge* and Madeline in *Inheritors* go through a painful and long spatial confrontation also due to the generational conflict. Claire and Madeline's struggle is one they experience alone. Moreover, these strong New Women characters do not only have to cope with True Women characters, but also with male characters defending Victorianism and the traditional roles women had to have in society, family, and life.

Claire's battle against Victorianism is a solitary and brave enterprise, for Claire epitomises the attack on the idea of female virtue. This might be the reason why members of Heterodoxy applauded Claire in *The Verge* so much. Hutchins Hapgood summarises the reception of the play in the following terms:

At the next meeting of Heterodoxy, the subject for discussion was this play. One of my friends in the club, Elise Dufour the dancer, who had never succeeded in getting away from what those women called the mere man's psychology, describing the meeting to me, said, 'It seemed to me, while these women were talking about *The Verge*, that I was in church, that they were worshipping at some holy shrine; their voices and their eyes were full of religious excitement. I was, I think, the only woman not under the spell. I tried at first to say a few things about the play that were in the line of ordinary dramatic criticism, which I had thought had a reasonable basis; but when they all glared upon me, as if they thought I should be excommunicated, I spoke no further word.' (1939: 377)

Hapgood also thought this play was a bit extreme regarding feminism, since he claims that with *The Verge* Glaspell becomes "sentimental à rebours" (1939: 377). Nonetheless, given Hapgood's special commitment to feminism, that is, the way he believed in women's liberation movement as long as he could keep his own wife, Neith Boyce, taking care of their children at home, it is not surprising that he found Claire's rejection of motherhood and support of her husband too feminist.

As seen in this thesis, Claire is "the antithesis of the True Woman" (Noe 2002: 158), violating all the norms of femininity. A very interesting issue regarding Claire as New Woman is that she is not young. And, curiously, the youngest female character in the play, Claire's daughter Elizabeth, is a True Woman as much as her aunt Adelaide. Though Ben-Zvi calls Elizabeth a "New Woman" (2006: 294), maybe because of her youth, an analysis of how Glaspell describes her reveals the opposite. Indeed, I would

say that Glaspell employs Elizabeth to show the fall of the New Woman. As Deborah Kolb says, the Progressive Era (1890-1920) is characterised by the rise and fall of the New Woman. After the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment was passed in 1920, “the professional feminist movement began an unmistakable decline, and not until the 1960s did a strong revival begin” (Kolb 1975: 149). In her analysis of feminism in Greenwich Village from 1910 to 1920, June Sochen highlights the value of Crystal Eastman, Henrietta Rodman, Ida Rauh, Neith Boyce, and Susan Glaspell, and calls the readers’ attention towards the fact that these feminists had foreseen the failure of their movement. These women saw that the problem of the feminist agitation was that a great part of its supporters thought that gaining the vote would be enough to ameliorate women’s situation in every realm. This limited scope provoked a paralysis in other improvements in women’s situation that feminists asked for. In this manner, all the agitation of the feminist movement before 1920, which asked not only for the vote but also for a real cultural revolution, became minimised.<sup>20</sup> After 1920 “none of the existing women’s organizations carried on the feminist campaign. Most women’s organizations in the twenties refused to discuss abortion, birth control, or liberalized divorce laws” (1972: 146). As Ann Jones claims, “the revolution came down to this: the truly emancipated woman is the one who marries, has babies, and stays ever so quietly at home. After a century of struggle, women came back to square one” (1980: 259- 260).

Besides fighting to keep Adelaide and the traditionalism she represents out of her places, Claire also has to confront her daughter, representative of the demise of the New Woman concept. Elizabeth represents the things Claire hates in a woman: submission to the location that tradition has put her in. Glaspell shows this through a few questions Elizabeth answers.<sup>21</sup> When asked about her studies, she says “Well, the things one studies.” And in her free time Elizabeth also does “the things one does. Tennis and skating and dancing” (74). But Elizabeth is unable to explicate what she studies or does. She is not even able to explain why she is glad she is an American: “(laughing) Why – mother. Of course one is glad one is an American. All the girls –” (74). She just follows the stream of “all the girls.” And Elizabeth, who is not physically

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<sup>20</sup> See Sochen 1972, especially pp. 5 and 116 for her discussion on the impasse of the feminist movement in the United States around 1920.

<sup>21</sup> Glaspell also suggests Claire’s rejection of her daughter and the traditional stance the younger woman represents proxemically, by avoiding physical contact. See Chapter 4.2.2, pp. 175- 176.



tied to one place, as her trip to Europe symbolises, can only summarise her trip as “awfully amusing” (74). As seen in Chapter 3, though Elizabeth is free to move; for she has been to Europe, her memories of the trip do not make us think of a New Woman. Probably, her trip reverberates the kind of trip her aunt Adelaide, who has raised her, proposes to Claire: “Go to Paris and get yourself some awfully good-looking clothes – and have one grand fling at the gay world. You really love that, Claire, and you’ve been awfully dull lately” (82). Elizabeth is all appearance. The stage direction describes her as “*the creditable young American – well-built, poised, ‘cultivated’, so sound an expression of the usual as to be able to meet the world with assurance – assurance which training has made rather graceful. She is about seventeen – and mature. You feel solid things behind her*” (73). But as soon as she is questioned, her solid appearance falls down. She behaves as she has been trained at school, but she is empty inside. Elizabeth is a victim of place and tradition as they have made an empty, “usual”, person out of her.<sup>22</sup>

Madeline in *Inheritors*, another strong New Woman character, also takes her stance in the generational conflict, opposing True Women’s ideals, traditional male characters and uncommitted young female characters. The main representatives of the older values in this play are Felix Fejevary the Second and Ira Morton, who for very different reasons defend Victorian values. Felix Fejevary, as has been said, for financial reasons, and Ira because he is trapped in the past. Madeline, as Claire, is alone in her struggle to defend her beliefs and make Morton College the place it was meant to be. Unlike Madeline, the other young characters onstage do not defend the modern outlook for different reasons, though mainly isolationist and economic ones. Horace is closer to his father’s generation in his belief to keep America as a place devoid of problematic immigrant characters. Emil, a descendant of immigrants himself, is fully accommodated now to his position, so he does not help Madeline, either.

Interestingly, Glaspell shows the possibility that young women who are still traditional can be shaped into New Women through the process Madeline undergoes in *Inheritors*. Marcia Noe has described Madeline in the following terms: “the quintessential New Woman: bright, well-educated, lively, independent-minded, high-

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<sup>22</sup> For his production of *The Verge*, Stephen Bottoms decided to visualise Elizabeth’s emptiness by “present[ing her] as a huge, plastic, ‘shiny happy person’” doll (Bottoms 1998: 134).

principled, and non-conforming. But there is a side of her that is more Society Girl than New Woman.” However, “it is the politically committed, activist Madeline who triumphs over the more conservative society girl at the end of the play” (2002: 155). Madeline, as Noe puts it, moves from the tennis yard, the symbol of her traditional and bourgeois place in society, to the court yard, the place that symbolises her rebellion against what her place has become. For Madeline belongs to an accommodated family, a family with a sound and privileged past which makes everybody expect her to behave as a True Woman. But already her teachers at College have seen her as a bright, “peculiar the wrong way” girl, as Senator Lewis is afraid (122), that is, a sharp girl that may cause trouble and rebel against the older generation. Madeline, as Jhansi in *Close the Book*, is a girl that takes advantage of the fact that women are allowed to attend colleges, and who avidly read and reflect upon what they read. They are independent students that form their own ideas. Madeline’s first appearance onstage is in a tennis outfit, ready for a match; and symbolic of her status as a Society Girl. But the moment Madeline makes use of the tennis racket, a symbol of her class, to hit the police in order to defend the Hindu students, she begins to change. Her political ideas for Free Speech are not something to merely read about and discuss, but a serious matter that requires her physical involvement too.

While Glaspell shows hope for women in the change Madeline experiences, she also warns about the more traditional young girls who, as Elizabeth in *The Verge*, are used to embody the fall of the New Woman after 1920. The first appearance of Doris and Fussie onstage already reveals them as not serious characters, a sharp contrast to Madeline, supporting again the idea that hers is a solitary victimage of location: “*Two girls, convulsed with the giggles, come tumbling in*” (123). Glaspell seems to be criticising here the fact that when women are allowed to attend colleges, many of them do not take advantage of what this institution of learning can offer, and probably they only attend college to find a good husband and become housewives. Place thus becomes a problem for characters such as Madeline, who really want to take advantage of the place they are in, because women such as Doris and Fussie destroy the identity a library has for a New Woman, that of a serious site of learning. Glaspell visualises this issue further as she makes them dance in the library:

HORACE: Say, what’s this new jazz they were springing last night?

DORIS: I know! Now look here, Horace – L’me show you. (*she shows him a step*)

HORACE: I get you.

(*He begins to dance with her; the book he holds slips to the floor. He kicks it under the table.*)

FUSSIE: Be *careful*. They’ll be coming back here. (*glances off left*)

DORIS: Keep an eye out, Fussie.

FUSSIE: (*from her post*) They’re coming! I tell you, they’re *coming*!

DORIS: Horace, come on.

(*He teasingly keeps hold of her, continuing the dance. At sound of voices, they run off, right. FUSSIE considers rescuing the book, decides she has not time.*) (126, author’s emphasis)

Thus, with this dancing scene Glaspell completely locates Doris and Fussie on the other side of the generational conflict. They will never aid Madeline, for they do not share Madeline’s need to make the library have the identity it should. Surrounded by stacks of books, these failed “New Women” spend their time practising jazz steps. Moreover, the furtive way they do it, with Fussie watching for the adults to come, reveals their rather childish mentality. They are far from being mature college girls and New Women, and closer to the concept of the “flapper,” more interested in liberation regarding clothes and behaviour than in political and social power.<sup>23</sup> For Doris and Fussie, dancing in the library is something risky, even liberal, while the truth is that their actions are simply worthless for women’s struggle. Likewise, the way Arnold’s book is kicked under the table and left abandoned, since the girls are afraid of the reprimand they could get from Senator Lewis and Felix Fejevary, is more proof of their lack of interest in any intellectual matters. This is emphasised a bit later:

SENATOR LEWIS: What is your favourite study?

FUSSIE: Well – (*an inspiration*) I like all of them. (128)

The empty answer Fussie provides symbolises her empty head. She is not able to say what she prefers, and finds relief when she comes up with the answer “I like all of them,” without providing any support for her response. This is, however, a response that

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<sup>23</sup> For more information about the “flapper” see for instance Freedman 1983: 25- 26, and Jensen and Scharf 1983: 5.

leaves Senator Lewis, who is empty-minded as well, satisfied.<sup>24</sup>

A similar young female character, only caring for her looks and for fun, is created by Glaspell in *The Comic Artist* to destroy Eleanor's home. Again, the generational conflict together with the portrait of a decayed New Woman, Nina, is used to break the meaning of a place, as already analysed. Raised in New York and Paris, and a woman who enjoys the Myth of Mobility, Nina has, nonetheless, not taken any advantage of the possibilities these bohemian cities could offer her. Her main interest is looking pretty and making men fall at her feet. Glaspell visualises this point through her use of costume. Nina has a fur coat, which her mother, Luella, who can be considered a fallen New Woman too, makes her try on: "Isn't she ravishing in fur?" Nina answers, "Someday I'll have a sable" (35). Nothing is good enough for Nina. She always wants more material things. Furthermore, the places Nina usually goes to are also the places one goes to show off, such as the country club: "Nina liked it so much. She is wonderful – the kick she gets out of dressing up and going off to tea at some swell place" (44). This is the main reason Nina wants to move to New York. To buy smart clothes and dress up to go to nice places. Importantly, Nina does not have a job, but she depends totally on Karl's financial support. He is the one that pays for her clothes, her fur, and her trips. It seems she has learned much from her mother: "If I'm cruel and selfish it's because you are" (68). Luella has never worked: "Men are selfish, and it's a woman's job to get what she wants from them by finding out what they want and keeping it from them" (72), so she has always looked for rich targets to become her husbands:

LUELLA: Of course, Jack Ramsey, Nina's devoted father, didn't leave me behind, because I left him. How that man pinched his pennies! I never had a decent dress the whole year and a half I was with him. [...] When I went to mother, she said: 'but what are you going to do now?' she always thought of herself first, a selfish woman. But good looking! (*With feeling*) She was as beautiful as Nina! So there I was in New York – eighteen years old. I did have a good time. (*Giggles.*) Then I met McClure. He was mad about me. And I really cared a lot for him. (*Drains her glass.*) The skunk! [...] (*with a pause between every word*) He hasn't turned over a cent to me for six months. (*As STEPHEN'S silence seems to rebuke her.*) You

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<sup>24</sup> The similitude between Fussie in *Inheritors* and Elizabeth in *The Verge* is evident. They provide here almost the same answer about their studies and interests, and their hobbies are also tennis and dancing. Glaspell employs the same theatrical technique, their inability to think by themselves, to portray the place women lose due to the decay in women's movement after 1920, and that they constituted indeed a hindrance women had to overcome to regain their places in society.

know, Stephen, I wouldn't take a cent if it were just for me. I can make my way – but there's his own child, Alice. She's seven years old already. And the money you can spend for clothes, and the right teachers and doctors! (21)

Luella, as her mother did and as her daughter Nina has learned to do, uses her beauty to get money from men. And she wants Alice to follow the same path. When she thinks about what she could do with the money, she first thinks about clothes, then education, and finally health, in this significant order. No wonder Luella rejoices with the thought that Alice will “make the men stand around” (21). In this manner, Luella's later comment that “Now I want to be independent of men, that's why I've come to you” (21) sounds very ironical. She claims she wants to be independent of men, a lie revealed as she comes to Stephen to ask him for money and connections to start a business in New York. As it could not be otherwise, her dream shop is intended to sell those things that may make women more attractive to men, “Scarfs and frocks – little things – bracelets” (21). Her obsession with beauty and age is also reflected in her own costume, her dyed hair and the fact that a vanity case is her main stage property: “*LUELLA occupies herself with the vanity case, fixes her curly, bobbed hair under her hat. In the clearer light LUELLA looks her age. She is dressed too youthfully*” (12).<sup>25</sup> All the women in Luella's family seem doomed to become fallen New Women, since they are educated to be so, from Luella's mother to her youngest child Alice. And hence, Luella and Nina come to Eleanor's place to engage in a conflict between a True woman, Eleanor, and themselves, who are modern in looks and atypical regarding traditional behaviour, but lacking the moral consistency of the New Woman who wants to make a living for herself.

Regarding the generational conflict between women in Glaspell's writings, Linda Ben-Zvi believes that,

In her writing she would continually focus on the schism between those who believed in conformity and those who tried to escape it, those inside the circle and those on the verge of struggling to get out. Central to her work is the idea that if women are to progress and find their voices, they must finally overcome or ignore those loving, but constricted, figures who stand more threateningly in their way: *their mothers*. (2005: 28, emphasis mine)

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<sup>25</sup> Luella's costume has been analysed in Chapter 3.2.1 as a theatrical device Glaspell employs to visualise this displaced character. See pp. 98- 99.

Ben-Zvi's assertion about the need Glaspell's female characters have to overcome their mothers in order to become independent and fulfilled women rightfully applies to most of Glaspell's fiction, but only to some of her plays. Nina must get away from what her mother taught her in *The Comic Artist* if she is to be a New Woman, something she does not do; similarly Clara's stricture in *Close the Book* is not a good example for her daughter-in-law, as Jhansi reacts against what Clara represents throughout the play; and we can assume that Claire's mother in *The Verge* would resemble her traditional sister Adelaide and that she probably was another "Flower of New England" in the fashion of those Claire utterly rejects. However, in *Inheritors* Madeline has the example of her mother to aid outsiders. Elizabeth in *The Verge*, instead of escaping her mother, would gain independence if she followed Claire's model of independence from given rules. And then Glaspell offers the range of grandmother characters whom her modern female characters should follow; for Mother in *Chains of Dew* and Grandmother in *Close the Book* are more willing to accept modernity and the outlook of the New Woman than other characters in these plays, and Grandmother in *Inheritors* is a symbol of exceptional strength. In many of Glaspell's plays, thus, Mothers and Grandmothers have a lot to teach younger female characters about how to have one's own place.

In her portrait of the New Woman's struggle against tradition, Glaspell sometimes makes other characters, male or female, join her heroine in order to fight the Victorian values that want to imprison them. This is the case of *Alison's House*. For scholars such as J. Ellen Gainor and Karen Laughlin, the main conflict of generation stands for "essentially opposing the traditional, Victorian values of Alison's brother and her sister Agatha, to the modern outlook of Father Stanhope's children, Eben, Ted, and Elsa, as well as his young secretary, Ann" (Laughlin 1995: 221). More specifically, Hinz-Bode affirms that Glaspell employs Alison's secret poems to reveal this generational conflict: "The play's struggle over what is to be done with Alison's poems is staged as a generational conflict" (2006b: 183- 184). Stanhope, the eldest part in this conflict, represents Victorianism, and his offspring, Eben and Elsa, are the bearers of a modern outlook. Moreover, it is also true that Glaspell questions here the value of patriarchy and its relation to stultifying moral, given roles for men and women alike. But as seen in other of Glaspell's plays, the conflict cannot be reduced to such an easy matter of age. For instance, Louise, who belongs to a generation in between, respects the given order and struggles so that this given order is maintained. And Ted, the

youngest character in the play, is presented as an individualistic and self-centred young man, who is not interested in any defence of new values, but solely in his personal profit. He is interested in making the real story of Alison public as long as he is the first one to tell that story to his college teacher, so that he can get a good mark in the easiest possible way.<sup>26</sup>

Glaspell completely abandons gender issues in generational conflict in order to concentrate fully on the clash between generations in her last play, *Springs Eternal*. I agree with Hinz-Bode's belief that the main conflict happens between two males, Owen and Jumbo, reproducing also the more traditional opposition between father and son, "a generational conflict concentrated on the contrast between isolation and connection" (2006b: 216), a set of binaries related to place, the geodichotomy between physical isolation and community. In more general terms, J. Ellen Gainor has affirmed that, in *Springs Eternal*, "we witness the superfluousness of the older generation, whose greatest endeavors seem to lie behind them and whose current lives seem painfully inconsequential when compared to the war effort that surrounds them" (2001: 244). That is, the main theme of this play is war, and Glaspell uses this theme to set the ground for the generational conflict, divided into two sides: isolationists and interventionists. This issue is treated in depth in the following chapter; however, I would like to highlight some important facts about the generation conflict in this play. In *Springs Eternal* the older generation feels responsible for the war. Owen regrets, "I feel I brought the war [...] And when I say I, of course I don't mean just myself – I'm not that conceited. I mean my generation, and particularly those people in it who were supposed to be thinking things out. We betrayed you, Mrs. Soames. We should be executed" (I, 17). Surprisingly, and in spite of their responsibility, the older generation in this play are "jaded and complacent" (Gainor 2001: 251) spending time in isolation, but they still force the youngest character, Jumbo, to join the Army and fight for their country. Thus, the generational conflict in this play is built upon the fact that the older generation chooses isolation for themselves, while they force interventionism upon the younger characters. Only two characters of the old generation, Margaret and Mrs. Soames, defend Jumbo's right to stay at home: "a man has a right to be the thing which in an honest heart he is. He doesn't *have* to be – what Hitler or his own dear father tells

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<sup>26</sup> This confrontation regarding what to do with Alison's poems is further developed in Chapter 6.4, pp. 300- 301.

him to be!” (III, 7, author’s emphasis). As Madeline in *Inheritors*, Jumbo will also be forced to leave his house, the place where he is not accepted because of his ideas, as I discuss in the following chapter.

To sum up, it could be said that the conflict of generations plays an important role in this study of geopathology in Susan Glaspell’s plays. The generational conflict, independently from gender issues, is an interesting one because, on the one hand, it shows the locations where these confrontations take place as a problem. The characters discussed in this section suffer from victimage of location because in the place they inhabit there is a latent confrontation regarding modernity vs. tradition. Glaspell employs these confrontations to establish the opposition between those characters who want to keep their places as they are, and those other characters who want to break away, either physically or metaphorically, from the same places. Above all, and regarding gender issues Glaspell tackles insistently in her plays, it could be said that the New Women find in the True Women the clear enemies that want to trap them in a given location. As this section has analysed, the New Women characters, germinal or more mature, rebel against social orders maintained by True Women and male characters identified with Victorianism. This section has also discussed that for Glaspell, being young does not automatically mean being better and thus entitled to replace the past and tradition. For the generational conflict in Glaspell’s plays demonstrates that rejecting Victorianism is not a matter of age but of mentality. The figure of the grandmother has emerged in this discussion as a useful bridge to cover the gap between generations, giving a glimpse of how many of the characters that can be called geopathic may use the older generation female character behind them to resolve their conception of place as a problem, a subject that will be developed in the last chapter of this thesis.

This chapter on the burden of the past has dealt with different issues relating to heritage and tradition for their importance in the constitution of a character’s identity and the problems that may arise in the spatial reflection of the past. Firstly, this chapter has discussed spatial representations of the past, focusing upon the heritage, material, spatial and ideological, that Pioneers and Pilgrims Fathers passed on to some of the characters Glaspell creates. This heritage can contribute to cause the victimage of location of some characters, since they see heritage as a set of oppressive rules,



presented physically and metaphorically in specific places, attempting to trap these characters in these places and given roles. And heritage can also contribute to victimage of location when characters have to struggle to maintain their heritage intact in their own places against the attacks of other characters. This chapter has also developed the idea that heritage can contribute to victimage of location when heritage is manipulated, its identity is altered, causing geopathology to those characters who cannot identify themselves with their heritage places. This chapter has discussed the role of tradition, understood in a more general sense as a set of rules that attempt to fix characters in places and given roles because of the location or the social position of the family they have been born into, and the way characters reaffirm such traditions through performativity. Finally, this chapter has focused on the clash between tradition and modernity, specifically in the theme of generational conflict. Having presented multiple factors contributing to the creation of geopathic onstage places throughout the previous chapters of this thesis, the following chapter focuses on the last set of images contributing to the dramatic creation of victimage of location: imagery of death. For if geopathic characters feel trapped in places and in roles, Glaspell enhances this feeling of victimage of location by physically or metaphorically relating such places to death.

**CHAPTER 6**

**IMAGERY OF DEATH**

**IN DRAMATIC GEOPATHOLOGY**

## CHAPTER 6

### IMAGERY OF DEATH IN DRAMATIC GEOPATHOLOGY

The presence of death is palpable in almost every play by Susan Glaspell. Glaspell's drama is crowded with corpses, placed either onstage or offstage. Glaspell puts corpses onstage or in a near offstage place in *The Outside*, *Alison's House*, *The Verge* and *The Comic Artist*. In *Bernice* there is a corpse in an adjoining room, while the farm in *Trifles* is used as John Wright's place of death before the play opens. Moreover, in other plays, such as *Chains of Dew*, Glaspell describes places by connecting them to death imagery. This issue consequently leads to a potential relationship between death and the dramatic discourse of geopathology. This chapter analyses the impact of death on the dramatic development of Glaspell's plays, and discusses how the use of death responds to a hostile environment, and also how this environment becomes more hostile for the living characters, who feeling death around them may also develop geopathology. This chapter is divided into four sections. Firstly, the configuration of the stage space as a grave. Secondly, the consistency of the image of the buried child in Glaspell's plays. Thirdly, the references to wars in Glaspell's dramatic works. And the concluding section focuses on the contribution of absent protagonists to the creation of dramatic geopathology, through their symbolic presence on the fictional onstage places.

#### 6. 1 Dramatic Representations of Home as Grave

In a general statement she does not develop sufficiently, Chaudhuri claims that images of burial are common to geopathic dramatic homes.<sup>1</sup> Chaudhuri's brief comment seems pivotal for the present analysis of geopathology in Susan Glaspell's plays, and consequently, this section focuses on Glaspell's creation of onstage places which could indeed be seen as metaphorical graves, helping to provide the stage space with a geopathic atmosphere. It could be said that the presence of images of graves in Glaspell's plays would locate her work within the tradition of women writers that Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar analyse in their *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979). As Gilbert and Gubar claim, the grave image in women's literature usually means "enclosure without any possibility of escape" (1979: 94). In the plays analysed in this

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<sup>1</sup> Chaudhuri briefly mentions "the disastrous link" between two prominent figures "in the discourse of geopathology: home and burial" (2000: 75). Chaudhuri's scarce references to this issue later on in her book are mainly related to the buried child figure, but never taking burial as a separate figure on its own.

chapter, Glaspell does not portray actual images of burial; the places created onstage can be considered, however, places of burial in themselves, metaphors of graves. The means Glaspell employs to suggest the burial atmosphere in her fictional places vary. In *Trifles* the onstage farm can be regarded as a metaphorical grave because it is set in a low, and tomb-like site.<sup>2</sup> In other plays, as advanced earlier, she puts corpses onstage or in a near offstage place, or verbally suggests the grave-like atmosphere of the place. The present section discusses the configuration of the stage space as a grave especially in *The Outside*, *Chains of Dew*, and *Alison's House*, where given Glaspell's repeated usage of words such as "burial," "cemetery," and "grave" to refer to her fictional places, these places can be seen as burial grounds.

In *The Outside*, both the interior setting of the old life-saving station and the localized offstage fictional place, the Outside, represent images of burial. The station is described as "a buried house" (51), and *The Outside*, which the title refers to, constitutes a natural image of burial, as it is clear at the first description Glaspell provides of the location of the old life-saving station. Through a big sliding door opening at rear onstage, one can perceive the dunes and the woods,

*At one point the line where woods and dunes meet stands out clearly and there are indicated the rude things, vines, bushes, which form the outer uneven rim of the woods – the only things that grow in the sand. At another point a sand-hill is menacing the woods. This old life-saving station is at a point where the sea curves, so through the open door the sea is also seen. [...] At right of the big sliding door is a drift of sand and the top of the buried beach grass is seen on this.* (48)

Glaspell describes this landscape in terms of burial: the sand buries the woods, the sea provokes deaths and menaces to swallow, to bury, the old life-saving station. This setting leads us to consider it as a natural place of burial.

Glaspell also makes the old life-saving station a place of burial by placing a corpse onstage. *The Outside* opens with the actual death of a sailor. As the curtain raises, there is a corpse in a room adjoining the centre of the stage where the main action takes place. The corpse is partly seen at some moments, for instance when Bradford, Tony and Captain are "*bending over this man's body, attempting to restore*

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<sup>2</sup> In Chapter 4.1 I have also discussed that the physical location of the farm is used to create isolation, see pp. 131- 132.

*respiration*” (48). Glaspell uses this image of death to start this play to show perhaps that the place where Mrs. Patrick now lives is a place of death, and to suggest visually the dead-in-life state of the female characters. Glaspell enhances the association between Mrs. Patrick and death the moment the dead sailor seems to offer his hand to her: “*One arm of the man [the Captain] is working with is raised, and the hand reaches through the doorway*” (49) in the direction of Mrs. Patrick. The hand of death passes the threshold, enlarging the feeling of death invading the old-life saving station. The atmosphere of death is also created verbally through the male characters’ conversation. Given that many wrecks have taken place close to the old life-saving station, Captain, Bradford and Tony recall that many men have died here: “Lord, the things that happened *here*. There’ve been dead ones carried through that door. (*pointing to the outside door*) Lord – the ones *I’ve* carried” (49, author’s emphasis). The image of all these dead sailors, reinforced by the actual corpse the audience can partially see onstage, is extrapolated to Mrs. Patrick and Allie Mayo. The male characters even compare these women to the sea: “But the sea is friendly as a kitten alongside the women that live here” (48). In the eyes of the sailors, the female characters are even more representative of death than the sea.

Important for the discourse of dramatic geopathology, it seems hardly possible to live a happy life in a place surrounded by death and images of death. The male characters agree that “The sand has put his place on the blink all right” (49) and they cannot understand why Mrs. Patrick has taken this menaced and abandoned place to live in. But Allie can, because she, as Mrs. Patrick, who has been abandoned by her husband, feels alone and dead in life.<sup>3</sup> Allie, whose sailor husband was lost to the North Sea, is as frozen as her husband. She detached herself then from social life and decided not to say “an unnecessary word” (51). As Allie admits herself, “The ice that caught Jim – caught me. (*a moment as if held in ice*)” (52). The stage direction makes clear the relationship between the physical ice that caught Jim and Allie’s metaphorical detachment. In keeping with Glaspell’s mastery of body language as an instrument of expression better than spoken language, Allie reproduces with her body her own metaphorical death in this ice metaphor. The very first description of Allie can also be read in terms of burial: “*ALLIE MAYO has appeared outside the wide door which gives*

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<sup>3</sup> In Chapter 4. I I have briefly discussed the importance of the isolated location of the old life-saving station as a symbolic representation of these husband-less women “abjection from the community” (133).

*on to the dunes, a bleak woman, who at first seems little more than a part of the sand before which she stands*” (50). Allie is first described as part of the sand which buries and menaces the woods. Mrs. Patrick can be also called a “buried” woman in a metaphorical sense. That Mrs. Patrick wants to be detached, “buried,” is also shown in the fact that she has taken Allie, a woman known in town for not saying an unnecessary word, as her sole companion.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, it could be argued that Mrs. Patrick has a “geoempathetic” feeling with the image of burial this natural landscape creates. That is, she rejoices in the enterprise of the sand-hills, which bury the grass fighting to see the light. It seems she draws a parallel between this image and her wish: “Everything that can hurt me. I want buried – buried deep” (54). Mrs. Patrick denies life as she says that “Spring – coming through the storm – to take me – take me to hurt me. That’s why I couldn’t bear – things that made me know I feel” (54). Mrs. Patrick hates the coming of spring because this season symbolises life, the season that makes her *feel* that on the Outside life, and not only burial, is also possible. At one point she even unconsciously contributes to the natural burial that takes place outside. The stage direction reads:

*she pushes the sand by the door down on the half buried grass – though not as if knowing what she is doing. (52)*

Mrs. Patrick is here burying the only leaves of grass that remind her of life, contributing to the natural image of burial, and at the same time her own wish to be buried is evidenced.

Glaspell underlines Mrs. Patrick’s longing for death when, contemplating the burial of the woods with which she identifies herself and reflecting upon this landscape, Mrs. Patrick lifts “*sand and let[s] it drift through her hand*” (53). This act can be read as Mrs. Patrick’s sinister rejoicing in death. She likes the feeling of death, symbolised in the burying sand drifting through her fingers. Allie replies to Mrs. Patrick’s visual engagement to this image of burial:

ALLIE MAYO: I know why you’re doing that. (*she looks up at her, startled*) (52)

ALLIE MAYO: I know where you’re going! (*MRS PATRICK turns but not as if she wants to*)

What you’ll try to do. Over there. (*pointing to the line of woods*) Bury it. The life in you –

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<sup>4</sup> In Chapter 4.2 I have also discussed that Mrs. Patrick “wants a shelter to let herself die”, “a place to equal the feeling of abandonment she experiences” (164).

watching the sand bury the woods ... Meeting the Outside. (*moving nearer; speaking more personally*) I know why you came here. To this house that had been given up; on this shore where only savers of life try to live. I know what holds you on these dunes, and draws you over here. (54)

Allie Mayo understands what Mrs. Patrick is doing on the Outside because, as discussed earlier, that is exactly what she has been doing since her husband died. Devoid of their traditional role in life, they have given in to their personification of loss and death in the landscape before them. As Marcia Noe has pointed out, these two women “retreat to the Outside to isolate and protect themselves from the pain of loss and rejection” (1983: 39). But, even more, they have retreated to the Outside to rejoice in their chosen feeling of death in life. In *The Outside*, place is a problem for characters, since its deadly configuration enlarges their own feeling of burial in life, and Allie and Mrs. Patrick are geopathic characters who have consciously chosen this geopathic place to live in. As will be explored in the final chapter of this thesis, the Outside will not only be seen as a place of death, but also as a place of life. As Noe says, “there is no clear line of demarcation between woods and sand in the struggle to dominate, the struggle between the forces of life and the forces of death is a battle that is never won” (1983: 39), but Mrs. Patrick and Allie will win the struggle and overcome their problem with place.

The configuration of the stage space as a grave is also important for the analysis of dramatic geopathology in *Alison's House*. The Stanhope homestead in Iowa, on the Mississippi, is so suffocated by nature that it does not only isolate this place,<sup>5</sup> but it can also be seen as a kind of grave. The river menaces the house:

HODGES: Folks like to go up the river now-a-days, not down the river. And with the old Mississippi rising higher every year, seems like she'd wash this place away 'fore we could get dead and buried. [...] The place ain't healthy [...] Seems like the river had something against this place. Right here on this bend's where she washes in more and more. (668-669)

The Mississippi threatens to bury the Stanhope house, in the same way that the trees help to suffocate it:

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<sup>5</sup> See Chapter 4.1, p. 133 for my description and brief analysis of isolation in the Stanhopes' estate location.

HODGES: Too many trees make a place gloomy.

EBEN: Those trees have been growing a long time.

HODGES: Well, then, they've been growing long enough, haven't they? (*Laughing, waiting for Eben to join him, but Eben does not.*) And the lilac hedge – shuts the place in too much. What's the use of putting your money in a place nobody can see? Take out some of that tangled old stuff and put in flower beds in fancy shapes – heart-shaped, maybe – you'd be surprised the difference it would make. (668- 669)

It might be possible that Glaspell had found inspiration for the recreation of the fictional stage space in *Alison's House* in Eugene O'Neill's *Desire under the Elms*, produced by the Provincetown Players in 1924. O'Neill describes his setting as follows:

two enormous elms are on each side of the house. They bend their trailing branches down over the roof. They appear to protect and at the same time subdue. There is a sinister maternity in their aspect, a crushing, jealous absorption. They have developed from their intimate contact with the life of man in the house an appalling humaneness. They brood oppressively over the house. They are like exhausted women resting their sagging breasts and hands and hair on its roof, and when it rains their tears trickle down monotonously and rot on the shingles. (1967: 28)

O'Neill's elms, as Glaspell's trees, lilac hedge, and menacing river in *Alison's House*, give to this place a geopathic aura; this is a place of deadly suffocation that will inevitably affect its dwellers. In *Alison's House*, Eben makes an explicit connection between the house and Alison's burial in this terms: "When I got the first glimpse of the place through the trees I had a feeling of the whole century being piled on top of her [Alison], that she couldn't get out from under" (662). In Eben's words, the house has become Alison's own metaphorical grave. This is not only the place where she died, but also the place where she was secluded and dead in life, a similar case to that of her sister Agatha.<sup>6</sup> The fact that Alison and Agatha's house becomes their grave is symptomatic of their geopathology.

While the outside appearance of the house in *Alison's House* makes it resemble a tomb, the library setting also resembles a kind of grave to the audience. The portraits of all those dead ancestors seem to be the company of the onstage characters trapped in

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<sup>6</sup> As analysed earlier in this thesis, Agatha was also imprisoned in the house, and she also found a grave in her home, metaphorically and literally, for she dies onstage in Act II and her corpse is indeed kept in the house, though offstage, throughout Act III. See pp. 147- 149.



this house, and the darkness of this room also contributes to a grave-like atmosphere. It is tempting to suggest again the influence of Emily Dickinson's poetry on Glaspell.<sup>7</sup> In poem 105, which Glaspell could have read because it had been published in 1924, Dickinson identifies house with grave:

The Grave my little cottage is,  
Where, keeping house for thee,  
I make my parlor orderly,  
And lay the marble tea.

For two divided, briefly  
A cycle, it may be  
Till everlasting life unite  
In strong society.

The parallels between this poem and Alison's and Agatha's situation are evident, for both find in their house their graves. Two other references seem to link this poem to Alison, and to Agatha. As far as Alison is concerned, Dickinson's reference about making the "parlor orderly" can be understood as Alison's submission to patriarchal rules, the rules that divided her from her lover, with whom she will only be reunited in death. Besides, poem 105 strikes one as being a perfect summary of Agatha's life. Buried in life, she kept the house for Alison, the 'thee' of the poem, and Agatha will meet Alison after her demise. Moreover, the "marble tea" image unites Agatha and the "I" of the poem. When Agatha appears onstage she is packing a tea set, similar to the way that the lyrical voice of poem 105 "lay[s] the marble tea." Furthermore, in the poem the tea set has a feature that connects it to death, for it is made out of marble, the material of tombstones. It does not seem a coincidental matter that Agatha's fatal decision to burn the house down with everybody inside occurs to her when she is with the tea set and chooses to use the packing straw for her deadly goal.

Glaspell establishes the same relationship between the house and its metaphorical representation as a grave in *Chains of Dew*. In this play Nora describes the Standishes' house as "a cemetery" (II, 2, 6). When Nora says this, she refers to the fact

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<sup>7</sup> The influence that Emily Dickinson might have exerted upon the writing of *Alison's House* has also been discussed in Chapter 4.2.1.2, pp. 150- 153.

that, as for what Seymore says about his house, there is not much to do there. The spatial configuration of the Standishes' house is not; however, as gloomy as Alison's is in *Alison's House*, probably because the prevailing tone in *Chains of Dew* is comic. The setting in this play is a richly furnished and comfortable room, used for social meetings. However, in dramatic geopathology even the nicest of places can be graves if they keep their dwellers dead in life. The metaphorical conception of the house as a cemetery in *Chains of Dew* gains force once Seymore reads aloud one of his poems. This poem will make Dotty recognise her own sense of victimage of location, for she realises that her house is a cemetery for her, it is her own grave. Seymore's poem reads,

She's in her coffin – she's in her grave,  
Outside her coffin, she was not brave.  
What did she have, when she had life?  
She had long hair – a good sound life.  
What has she now that she is dead?  
She has long hair – outside her head.  
So what is death – and what is life?  
To one who's but – a long-haired wife? (II, 1, 14)

In the fashion of the British “Graveyard Poets,” Thomas Gray, Edward Young and Robert Blair, who initiated the gothic aesthetics on bodily corruptions,<sup>8</sup> Seymore has written a poem, very mediocre though, on a dead woman whose hair, following *post-mortem* processes, goes on growing. While inspiring himself, Seymore muses,

‘Custom grows round her as the hair – ‘Oh, help! No. Here! This is the idea. ‘A woman’s crown of glory is her hair.’ But – the hair goes right on growing after the woman is dead! Ever think of that? (*Turning in excitement to Dotty, and brandishing Angelica*) It has nothing to do with her aliveness – her volition – her passion. *That’s* the kind of glory you women want! ‘Her hair grew long – though she was dead.’ Simple. ‘Her hair grows long – though she is dead.’ (II, 1, 8- 11, author’s emphasis)

The significance of the poem is that it makes Dotty think about her house as grave. The only feature of the protagonist of Seymore's poem is that she had long hair, symbolic of the fact that she did nothing in life. Dotty, who also has long hair, feels she is like this woman in the poem, and even more when Seymore brandishes Angelica, the long-

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<sup>8</sup> See Piñero Gil 1999: 225.

haired doll that Mother had modelled after Dotty. For Dotty, her coffin and her grave is her house, the place from where she does not dare to go out, but for other places her husband lets her. Following the discourse of the poem, Dotty realises that all she has in life is long hair, the symbol of the respectful, dutiful, and quiet wife she is. This acknowledgement will trigger the events that take place later in the play, regarding her struggle to get away from her identity as a long-haired wife and the subjugation to the patriarchal power this image of the dead long-haired wife symbolises.

To sum up, the imagery of burial that Glaspell displays in the plays analysed in this section varies from representations of houses as actual graves, for characters die in these places, as the drowned sailor in *The Outside*, and Agatha and Alison in *Alison's House*, to their status as metaphysical graves, which imprison characters in their roles, making them feel dead in life, as in the case of Dotty in *Chains of Dew*, and Alison and Agatha again in *Alison's House*. Special attention must be granted to Glaspell's construction of the burial metaphor in *The Outside*, and how Mrs. Patrick and Allie find in the sand burying the trees a metaphorical expression of their own self-chosen burial in life, what could be considered their self-chosen geopathology. Therefore, the representation of home as grave has an important role in the dramatic discourse of geopathology in Susan Glaspell's plays, since they straightforwardly point to place as a problem for the death, actual or metaphorical, of the characters located in these houses. The following section goes on exploring the imagery of death, focusing now on a precise image of burial, what Una Chaudhuri names the "Image of the buried child."

## 6. 2 The Buried Child

According to Una Chaudhuri the literary figure of the buried child is a privileged device of the modern American drama. For her, the buried child appears in modern American drama to confront the myth of home and family. Actually, the buried child is a casualty of problematic places.<sup>9</sup> The image of the buried child, nevertheless, does not only refer to a dead child character, but also to the images of an "unseen child," which may also refer to a "denied or unborn" child character (Chaudhuri 2000: 110). Glaspell never presents onstage a dead child, unlike the muddy remains of the buried child Sam

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<sup>9</sup> See Chapter 2, p. 73.

Shepard brings to the stage at the end of *Buried Child*. Glaspell, however, utilises her dramatic skills over the absent character with great success and variety. The death, disappearance, or non-existence of the delicate figure of the baby certainly has a powerful dramatic power on the audience, provoking thoughts about the reasons behind the absence or disappearance of this kind of character.<sup>10</sup>

The “buried child” as an image functions as “the secret” in realist drama: “the buried child underwrites a drama of secrecy and revelation, of deeply hidden meaning and inevitable disclosure” (Chaudhuri 2000: 281, n. 14). And it is inhabited by other terrible associations, such as “traumatic birth, abortion, death-in-life, and hell,” and all together help to configure dramatic geopathology (2000: 236). In other words, an analysis of the image of the buried child in modern drama would reveal the pathology behind the absence of this child figure and its relationship with the place that rejected or complicated its appearance. This section analyses the literary figure of the buried child in Susan Glaspell’s plays, including those instances where child characters are actually buried, those where they are not born, and paying close attention to those cases when Glaspell explicitly links the image of the buried child with the onstage places her characters inhabit.

Glaspell consistently works on the buried child image in three of her plays: *Trifles*, *The Verge* and *Chains of Dew*. These three plays answer to three different versions of the motif of the buried child. In *Trifles*, the unborn child has a vital importance for understating the geopathology inherent in the play. *The Verge* focuses on the dead child, while *Chains of Dew* spins around birth control. The different versions of the buried child motif could seem opposed, but they answer to Susan Glaspell’s personal situation and her social consciousness. Barbara Ozieblo and Linda Ben-Zvi

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<sup>10</sup> It must be noted that actually no child character appears in any of Glaspell’s plays. Only in *The Comic Artist*, baby Wallop is offstage, and his existence is suggested through verbal references and his costume onstage. It could be argued that maybe placing a baby onstage would diminish the geopathic conditions of the places Glaspell creates, though other possibilities could also explain its absence, such as Glaspell’s own painful experience for being childless, as explained later on, or even the impossibility of having real babies or very young actors onstage.

have observed that Glaspell's childless condition obsessed her throughout all her life.<sup>11</sup> After her miscarriage in 1914 a fibroid tumour was detected in her uterus. The tumour was removed, but the operation left Glaspell unable to have children. "I always wanted children but couldn't have any of my own," confided Susan to one of her friends (qtd. in Ben-Zvi 2005: 376). But as a feminist, Glaspell was well aware of the fact that children require a nice home to be raised in, hence her participation in women's movement and her defence of women's right to decide whether to be mothers or not. Ozieblo affirms that Glaspell's thwarted wish to be a mother is evident in what Glaspell considered the best pose for a woman:

The best pose for a woman is when she is a mother and holding a baby in her lap. In focusing on the baby – wanting to hold her forward so the baby looks good – the mother herself looks beautiful. In the transcendent act of love and self-effacement she becomes the object of adoration. (Sundgaard qtd. in Ozieblo 2000: 263)

This description resembles enormously the pose of the Sistine Madonna, a pose that, as argued later, Glaspell attacks in two of her plays, *Chains of Dew* and *The Verge*, for establishing the constraining maternal role usually attached to women. I think that though there is no doubt that Glaspell always wanted to be a mother, she understood that having a baby was a personal decision every woman had to be free to take or not. This is the reason why the different versions of the buried child motif appear in her plays with different purposes. The female characters she depicts in her plays are all different, and their positions towards motherhood also vary. But whatever the case, as this section argues, the buried child image always appears in her plays in close connection to the onstage place, hence its interest for dramatic geopathology.

In her article "'Murder She Wrote': The Genesis of Susan Glaspell's *Trifles*", Ben-Zvi highlights how the fact that Margaret Hossack, the real Minnie Wright, had given birth to a child before marriage was determinant in her trial. Basing upon Glaspell's reports on the Hossack trial, Ben-Zvi argues that the County Attorney Clammer used this bombshell to provide the jury with the impression that Mrs. Hossack

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<sup>11</sup> In her article "Silenced Mothers and Questing Daughters in Susan Glaspell's Mature Novels" Barbara Ozieblo focuses on the "unwanted, dead, illegitimate or adopted children that recur in Susan Glaspell's novels" and which "indicate a certain preoccupation or even obsession with motherhood" (2006a: 137). In this article, Ozieblo provides several details about Glaspell's "thwarted maternal wish" (2006a: 141).

“was a woman not to be trusted” (1992: 151). The double standard was exercised to sustain that as Mrs. Hossack had done something improper for a woman, being pregnant before marriage, she could as well have killed her husband.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, in her dramatic version of Margaret Hossack’s murder case, Glaspell provides children with a leading importance in the dramatic development of the play, and even more important is the image of the buried child. In *Trifles* this image is closely linked to the pioneer experience. The hostile environment of the isolated Midwest farm where the play is set seems crucial to the most fragile characters. In the following excerpt Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters talk about the stillness of the prairie environment in these terms:

MRS HALE: (*her own feeling not interrupted*) If there’d been years and years of nothing, then a bird to sing to you, it would be awful – still, after the bird was still.

MRS PETERS: (*something within her speaking*) I know what stillness is. When we homesteaded in Dakota, and my first baby died – after he was two years old, and me with no other then. [...] I know what stillness is. (*pulling herself back*) The law has got to punish crime, Mrs. Hale. (44)

Mrs. Peters foreshadows the matter of the pioneer child dying because of the place the child lives in. Isolated pioneer life makes children’s death a common casualty. While it is true that the reason why Mrs. Peters’s baby died is unknown, she makes the connection between stillness and death. The Peterses “homesteaded” in Dakota as the Wrights live in a farmhouse in Iowa, miles apart from other farmhouses, customarily in the process of colonisation. The pioneer Grandmother Morton of *Inheritors* regrets this relationship between physical isolation and children’s death:

Well, I don’t know how children ever get raised. But we raise more of ‘em than we used to. I buried three – first ten years I was here. Needn’t ‘a’ happened – if we’d known what we know now, and if we hadn’t been alone. (115)

It is not only that isolation and stillness is enlarged by being childless, but what Glaspell also denounces in *Trifles* and *Inheritors* is that many children died in pioneer times because the organisation of the land deterred assistance in cases such as children’s illness, triggering their demises.

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<sup>12</sup> For more information about how the fact that Mrs. Hossack had a baby outside wedlock was used against her in the trial see Bryan and Wolf 2005, pp. 45, 98, and 175.

In *Trifles* Glaspell broadens the figure of the buried child with the figure of the unborn child. It is significant to notice that in the Hossack case Margaret had nine children; five were with her in the farm when the murder occurred,<sup>13</sup> while her fictional counterpart, Minnie, is childless. The fact that Glaspell's Minnie is childless appears as a determining factor when analysing victimage of location in this play. All Minnie had was the "stillness" Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters lamented on earlier. About children Mrs. Hale claims: "Not having children makes less work – but it makes a quiet house, and Wright out all day, and no company when he did come in" (42). It is clear, both women agree, that a child would have brought joy and company to Minnie's life, because at certain moments of their lives Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters have experienced themselves how lonely one can feel in their isolated farms without the company of children. In *Bernice* Glaspell comes back to this issue of how a childless house is quite probably to be a sad house. Right after commenting on Bernice's life with her solitary father, Craig suggests his relief about Bernice's childless condition:

CRAIG: Well, Bernice isn't leaving any children to – be without her. I suppose now it's just as well we lost our boy before we ever had him. But she would have made a wonderful mother, wouldn't she, Margaret?

MARGARET: Oh, yes! (192)

There is not any more information about the causes of Bernice's abortion, but Margaret's exclamation "Oh, yes!" leads the audience to think that it is not only that Bernice would have been a wonderful mother, but also that she really wanted to be one. Having lost her baby, Bernice lived in this isolated house, with a father that had decided to live apart from the world, surrounded by lonely woods and with her husband absent in his multiple trips to Europe and New York. Bernice's solitude would certainly be enlarged due to her childlessness.<sup>14</sup> Stillness, coming together with the image of the unborn child, helps to configure a geopathic place in *Bernice* and *Trifles*.

As in *Bernice*, in *Trifles*, the reason why the Wrights never had a child remains unknown. Nevertheless, the unborn child is used in *Trifles* to justify the murder of John Wright. In the eyes of Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters one of the reasons Minnie killed John

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<sup>13</sup> For more information about the real case see Bryan and Wolf 2005.

<sup>14</sup> These other factors leading to Bernice's possible victimage of location because of her isolation and loneliness have been discussed in Chapter 4.1, see pp. 134- 135.

was that he never gave her a child that could help her overcome the geopathic conditions of living alone on the farm. Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters present John as an unloving and “hard man. Just to pass the time of day with him – (*shivers*) Like a raw wind that gets to the bone” (42). The way the murder is committed in *Trifles* is closely related to Minnie Wright’s childless condition. Although the murder does not happen on stage, according to what Mr. Hale says about it, the murder takes place in bed (37). Even though Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters do not make any comment on this issue, it is extremely important. The crime scene can be analysed in realistic terms. That is, taking into account that there is an implied possibility in the play that John was a battering husband,<sup>15</sup> this suggests that John was maybe stronger than Minnie. And this fact could have led her to kill her husband while he was sleeping, thus defenceless. A more metaphorical interpretation of the reasons why probably this murder takes place in bed is possible. In her analysis of women’s death in Classical literature, Nicole Loreaux describes bed as a symbolical place to die, since this is “the proper place for the moderated pleasure that the marriage institution accepts, a place, above all, where procreation is verified”<sup>16</sup> (1989: 47, my translation). As the Wrights’ bed has nothing to do with marital love or passion, and less with the verification of procreation, in the case that Minnie had killed her husband, the mechanics of her murder could be interpreted as a symbolic retribution for not having been given a child to be with her during the long, lonely days on the farm, for John’s alleged contribution to making this place even more problematic for Minnie.

In *The Verge*, Glaspell employs the image of the buried child to reflect upon the kind of world children are brought into, to show that if there is a problem with place, it would be better not to give birth to more children who could later endure geopathology. Claire has already been analysed as the New Woman character that rejects women’s traditional role of motherhood.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, in this same approach to Claire and motherhood, and accounting for the way Claire mistreats her daughter Elizabeth, Marcia

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<sup>15</sup> As seen in Chapter 4.2.1.2, p. 157, some scholars have found evidence to claim that Glaspell depicts in Minnie a victim of domestic violence.

<sup>16</sup> “lugar previsto para el moderado placer que la institución conyugal tolera, lugar, sobre todo, en que se verifica la procreación” (Loreaux 1989: 47).

<sup>17</sup> See pp. 175- 176 for my discussion of Claire’s rejection of the imprisoning mother role, and 229- 230 for the generational conflict in *The Verge* between Elizabeth and Claire.



Noe labels this character as an “unloving mother” (2002: 158). However, little has been said about Claire’s dead son, David, and her deep love for him:

ADELAIDE: You’ve never known the faintest stirring of a mother’s love.

CLAIRE: That’s not true.

HARRY: No. Claire loved our boy.

CLAIRE: I’m glad he didn’t live. (84)

This is the very first time Claire’s dead boy is mentioned, a boy she is glad did not live long. Later on she explains her point, revealing her great love for him, a love that makes her see his death as preferable to the life he would have had:

CLAIRE: I’ve known a few moments that were life. Why don’t they help me now? One was in the air. I was up with Harry – flying – high. It was about four months before David was born – the doctor was furious – pregnant women are supposed to keep to earth. We were going fast – I *was* flying – I had left the earth. And then – within me, movement, for the first time – stirred to life far in air – movement within. The man unborn, too, would fly. And so – I always loved him. He was movement – and wonder. In his short life were many flights. I never told anyone about the last one. His little bed was by the window – he wasn’t four years old. It was night, but him not asleep. He saw the morning star – you know – the morning star. Brighter – stranger – reminiscent – and a promise. He pointed – ‘Mother’, he asked me, ‘what is there – beyond the stars?’ A baby, a sick baby – the morning star. Next night – the finger that pointed was – (*suddenly bites her own finger*) But, yes, I am glad. He would always have tried to move and too much would hold him. Wonder would die – and he’d laugh at soaring. (*looking down, sidewise*) Though I liked his voice. (87, author’s emphasis)

For what she says, Claire’s buried child was like her, a character that could not stand conforming to the rules of the earth. David was a baby that liked flying, escaping from the place he was supposed to occupy. As Wolff states, Claire “loved her son because he displayed mobility” (2003: 210). Her baby, Claire acknowledges, would have suffered, as she does, the constraining impositions of society, “the chaos and failure of the world she sees around her” (Gainor 2001: 157). I agree with Gainor’s belief that “Glaspell brilliantly captures here Claire’s rationalization of the loss of her son, her preference that he die rather than lose the potential and wonder of a childhood that had to give way to adulthood in a debased culture” (2001: 157). It might be possible that Glaspell inspired herself in Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper” (1892) for this

particular image of the buried child. In this story of entrapment, the female protagonist and narrator, imprisoned in an abandoned nursery room, congratulates herself on the “fortunate escape” of the baby, which “does not have to occupy this nursery with this horrible wall-paper” (1996: 1138). “Why, I wouldn’t have a child of mine, an impressionable little thing, live in such a room for worlds,” “I can stand it so much easier than a baby, you see,” says the narrator in Guilman’s short story (1996: 1138). Claire in *The Verge* also feels that with his death his son is protected from future sufferings. David loved movement, the air, the outside, exploration, in sharp contrast to Claire’s living daughter, Elizabeth, who has been described as “a tower that is a tower” (79). Explicitly speaking about her own unmotherly role, Claire refers to Elizabeth in the following terms: “(pointing to ELIZABETH – and the words come from mighty roots) To think that object ever moved my belly and sucked my breasts!” (78). As suggested earlier, Elizabeth, the daughter Claire despises Elizabeth because, unlike her, she is a human being that conforms to social rules, even to the point that remembering any bodily link between her and her daughter makes her feel enraged and refer to her daughter as “that object”.

A third variation on the figure of the buried child appears in *Chains of Dew*, where Glaspell explores women’s rejection of compulsory motherhood and shows her belief in women’s freedom to decide whether to have children or not. The image of the buried child is explored in this play under the light of the Birth Control Movement. This unborn child differs from the ones in *Trifles* and *Bernice* because in this case there is no abortion, nor a husband who does not fulfil a woman’s motherly need. Susan Glaspell joins here a very important movement: the birth control campaign. Crusaded for mainly by Margaret Sanger in the United States, this campaign brought together many Greenwich Village celebrities, such as Emma Goldman, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, and Mary Ware Dennett; who politically demonstrated their belief in the importance of voluntary motherhood, appealing then to the spreading of contraceptives. These women were also supported by men, such as Max Eastman, Floyd Dell and Hutchins Hapgood,

although the real extent of their commitment is still a controversial matter.<sup>18</sup> The women of the Provincetown Players, most of them members of Heterodoxy and the Liberal Club, took part in the struggle for birth control through their writings.<sup>19</sup>

In *Bernice* Glaspell presents the topic of birth control briefly. Margaret, the New Woman of the play does not have any children because she has neither the time nor the place a baby requires for its proper development:

CRAIG: You ever wished to have any children, Margaret?

MARGARET: Yes.

CRAIG: (*Roughly.*) Well, why don't you have?

MARGARET: (*Slowly.*) Why, I don't just know, Craig. Life – seems to get filled up so quickly.

(192- 193)

The issue is not developed any further in this play. It is clear, however, that Margaret is too busy with her commitment to social causes, and that, consequently, she cannot enjoy motherhood. This is her decision and her sacrifice. Nora in *Chains of Dew* incarnates a similar stance. She wants to be a mother, but this will happen only when circumstances are fair: "I'm sure I will have [babies], as soon as I can get around to it" (II, 1, 27). With Margaret's and Nora's brief comments on motherhood, Glaspell introduces the topic she would develop more extensively in *Chains of Dew*, namely that the unborn child is sometimes preferable to having a child when the mother has not the place or the time to take proper care of it. The born child and a healthy place should come together, otherwise the outcome will be victimage of location, a child being

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<sup>18</sup> For an extended analysis of the Birth Control Movement in Greenwich Village see Stansell 2000: 225-272. Hutchins Hapgood's position about this movement appears in his autobiography *A Victorian in the Modern World*, pp. 239-240, 280; and for Dell's support of feminist movements see his *Homecoming: An Autobiography*, pp. 247, 261, 283. Judith Barlow notes that "Yet Hapgood, like such fellow Provincetowners as Harry Kemp, Max Eastman, and Floyd Dell, *apparently* saw themselves as feminists" (1995: 278, emphasis mine). Lois Rudnick makes a similar criticism: "the male feminists of Greenwich Village whose idealistic rhetoric was often undermined by what they actually wanted from the real women in their lives. [...] What] they most often sought in their own personal relationships and celebrated in their fiction and poetry were women who were joyful and exciting companions, willing to subordinate home, community, and their own desires to men's needs.[...] Seeking a New Woman who would give them the best of all possible worlds, they wanted a lover who was always available to fulfil their sexual needs; a mother to provide them with the emotional security they lost when they abandoned their middle-class roots; and a muse to inspire them to world-transforming political and aesthetic feats" (1991: 78). In "Una imagen propia: La innovación protagonizada por dramaturgas norteamericanas de principios de siglo" Ozieblo even labels Glaspell's male mates "machoist feminists" ["feministas machistas"] (2002: 33-34).

<sup>19</sup> For more information about this issue see for instance Gainor 1995.

brought up in a place that does not welcome her/him and which will negatively affect her/his character.

Many critics have seen Glaspell's *Chains of Dew* as a mere mockery of the Birth Control Movement. For instance, the headline of the *New York Herald* review of this play was "Susan Glaspell's 'Chains of Dew' Is Sharp Satire. Provincetown Players' Production Attacks Bobbed Hair and Birth Control" (1922: 10). It seems that many critics of Glaspell's day, as well as more recent ones, have been misled by the secondary title of the play, "A Comedy in Three Acts." Certainly, *Chains of Dew* is a comedy, but it also "give[s] one something to think about" (Rathbun qt. in Gainor 2001: 193). As J. Ellen Gainor believes,

The satire in the play is actually quite complex, operating at multiple levels. Some of the characters within the world of the play do poke fun at birth control. But Glaspell is also careful to direct how we receive these opinions. [...] As a result, the earlier satire gives way to a more serious consideration of the significance of both personal choices and political commitments. (2001: 193)

It would seem that Nora Powers, given that she officially works for birth control in her office, should be the most representative character in this concern. However, it is through Nora that Glaspell treats comically the issue of birth control. Nora says "Birth Control is the smart thing in New York this season. [...] When suffrage grew so – sort of common – the really exclusive people turned to birth control. It's rather more special, you know" (II, 1, 26). Through Glaspell's parody, Nora's real commitment to birth control seems, at least, suspicious, as if birth control were just a fashionable campaign, like having one's hair bobbed.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, it is through the configuration of the stage space that Glaspell brings to surface the seriousness of the unborn child. Nora's workplace, her birth control office, confronts the audience with the reality of compulsory motherhood. On the wall of Nora's office there is a poster representing two houses. On one there is a mother with nine children and on the other there is a mother with two children, saying "*in no uncertain terms that it is more desirable to have two children than nine.*" There is also an "*excess family exhibit,*" a scale model representing

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<sup>20</sup> In Chapter 3 I have focused on Nora as an invader, providing support to see this character as an unsympathetic one, unlike the standpoint of some scholars. The way Glaspell presents Nora's commitment to birth control would again help to see that this character is not completely nice, but a mixture that makes her a fascinating character. See pp. 95- 98.

the space of “*a forlorn kitchen in which a mother struggles with seven children*” (I, 1). In Nora’s words to O’Brien these materials stand for the respect children deserve:

NORA: I’ll tell you why the demonstration. Because our laws are so benighted and vulgar that they do not permit a personal matter, to be carried on in a personal way. The demonstration is to demonstrate the stupidity of the law. The cruelty. The vulgarity. The brainlessness. (*With growing excitement, personally directed against the young man*) Do you wish to give birth to seven children you cannot feed? Have you no respect for children? A child has a right to be wanted. You bring into this world and impoverished, defective, degenerate – (I, 9)

Glaspell makes Nora say explicitly what has been discussed above, that children must have a proper place to dwell in. To make her point clearer, Glaspell extrapolates the buried child image to Ireland. The poster, the exhibit and Nora’s speech make O’Brien think about his country: “In Ireland, families are much too large. (*getting excited about it*) If we had not had such large families in Ireland, Ireland need not have been the impotent nation she was” (I, 10). O’Brien’s very family is an example of what he says: his mother has nine children (I, 11). Glaspell makes use of the case of Ireland to highlight the problem of overpopulation, hence the importance of birth control. During her economic disaster in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, at the time of the famine, Ireland proved that there was not space for the large families her Catholic culture promoted. Famine made many Irish people die in the place they were born. The luckiest ones could emigrate, trying to find a place to live in other countries, especially the United States. Glaspell uses the extreme case of Ireland to anthropologically support her point that every child needs a place before being born. Important in dramatic geopathology, for the child born in an improper place, death, or in better cases forced immigration, though not self-chosen departure, awaits.

Through the figure of the unborn child, Glaspell shows that the defence of birth control is not an easy matter in a society that grants women a primary place as mothers. To depict this confrontation, Glaspell establishes a dialectics between stage properties that embody two points of view: Nora’s posters and family exhibit and a portrait of the Sistine Madonna. When Act II opens in the library of the Stanhopes, the room is presided by a picture of the Sistine Madonna, hanging on the rear wall, centre stage. The Sistine Madonna has always “exercised an immediate influence on the destiny of

the sex” (Fuller 1999: 27), since it is a strong symbol of “conventional femininity and idealized motherhood” (Gainor 2001: 180), and its central location in the Standishes’ room grants it special prominence. Furthermore, what this Sistine Madonna represents seems to lead the lives of Dotty and Grandmother, as Seymore struggles to see his women and to maintain their identity as copycats of the Madonna model. The unborn child image has no place in Seymore’s house, for women must be Madonnas.<sup>21</sup> Thus, though Glaspell suggested that the best pose for a woman is to resemble a Sistine Madonna, she does not present the Sistine Madonna in a positive light. Her female protagonists resist being considered “objects of adoration,” and they oppose the idea of bringing children into a world which cannot take proper care of them.

Though at the beginning of *Chains of Dew* Dotty and Mother are traditional female characters, their contribution to the development of the unborn child image happens early in the play. The very first glimpse we have of the Sistine Madonna in *Chains of Dew* shows that it is already a weakening symbol, since “*the Sistine Madonna appears to be attempting to lower herself*” (II, 1, 2). This stands for Dotty and Grandmother’s wish to be seen differently from traditional women and idealised mothers, and this foresees their later support of the birth control movement. Indeed, the Madonna is “loose at one end” (II, 1, 2) because Dotty has been trying to take it down:

SEYMORE: Dotty, dear, what have you been doing to weaken the Sistine Madonna? And while

I was away!

DOTTY: Well, I was going to take her down. I took this out (*reaching back to the screw which holds the wire*) to put in another picture – and then – (*ruefully*) I didn’t know what to put up.

SEYMORE: But what has the Sistine Madonna done?

DOTTY: You always make fun of our having the Madonna hanging here – so I thought – I wanted to have things pleasant when you got home – But I didn’t know what else to put up.

SEYMORE: My dear Dot, you know perfectly well I want you to have the Madonna hanging here. Since you like Madonnas – by all means let her bless our home. (*He is all the while making her secure, Dotty steadying*)

DOTTY: I’m not crazy about her. But I didn’t know what else to put up.

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<sup>21</sup> As already seen, in *The Verge* Glaspell would come back to this visual symbol of what traditional women are supposed to be. Claire, who rejects her daughter Elizabeth, is recommended “You’d better look at the Sistine Madonna” (81). The reference to the Sistine Madonna in *The Verge* has also been analysed regarding Claire’s deviation from traditional, and entrapping forms of, art; see Chapter 5.2, pp. 211- 212.

SEYMORE: Well, don't worry your poor little head about that. She's quite all right. See? I return her to her time honoured place. (*He begins to laugh*)

DOTTY: That's why I was going to take her down. Because you laugh at her.

SEYMORE: No, no, really Dot, I wasn't laughing at her. I was laughing to think of certain other pictures of mother and child I saw in New York. In New York they have some amazing pictures. One – a mother with nine children. The other – a mother with two children.

DOTTY: Well, I wish you'd brought them home. I'd like some new pictures.

SEYMORE: They're not at all suited for the town.

DOTTY: But I think it would be nice to have some things not suited to the town. (II, 1, 3- 4)

Dotty and Seymore's argument reveals the determinism of motherhood in spatial terms. Seymore wants the Sistine Madonna to "bless" the house, and thus he returns it to its "honoured place." Meanwhile, Dotty has already attempted on her own to liberate space from the immediate influence of the Sistine Madonna. It seems that Dotty just wanted to change the decoration of the library to please her husband, for she talks "*ruefully*", but the truth is that she is not "crazy about" the Sistine Madonna. A bit later she emphatically affirms, "I'm *off* Madonnas" (II, 2, 23, author's emphasis). When Nora brings all her information about birth control, Dotty will be able to materialise her uncertainties, and she will know what to put up on the wall instead of the Madonna: the birth control posters. The conflict that will take place between the Madonna image and the New York posters will be enlightening for Dotty's and Mother's identity, and Dotty will use them as her principle of departure, to change the decoration of the house to mark the identity she would like to have.

Glaspell also gives strength to the image of the unborn child through birth control as Mother, who should be the most traditional character, has a say on this topic. Given her advanced age, it is surprising that Mother is so promptly and eagerly committed to the birth control campaign. But it is precisely because she has given birth to many children that she knows of the difficulties of providing them with a place to be properly raised in. Visually, Glaspell puts this idea on stage as Mother helps Nora to set up the excess family exhibit. Mother "*takes [the children] out and tries different arrangement of them*" (II, 2, 9). Significantly, they are seven, the same number of children she has. As she takes one of the children and lets him fall into the garbage pail, Seymore is utterly disturbed, for he is precisely his mother's seventh child (II, 2, 9). The way Mother puts one of the children into the garbage pail is indicative of the fact that

she bears in mind the idea of the unborn child. Had birth control existed at her time, she would probably not have had so many children. She argues with Seymore and the Dean:

MOTHER: You never had seven children, did you, Dean? [...] Well, I did. Nora, here is seven hundred dollars for birth control. (*Hands her the check*) Seven is too many. Children I mean. [...]

SEYMORE: Mother! (*She looks up at him*) I was the seventh.

MOTHER: So you were, Seymore.

SEYMORE: If you'd had less, you would not have me!

MOTHER: True enough!

SEYMORE: (*With mounting feeling*) You are giving seven hundred dollars to a movement which, had it existed, would have meant my non-existence? (*Silence*) Well, that's *one* way of wishing me out of existence. (*Rage mounting*) You are willing to give seven hundred dollars to gratify a wish for my non-existence!

MOTHER: Now why must men be so personal? I don't wish your non-existence. Now that I'm acquainted with you – used to you – I'm reconciled with your existence. But there's no use talking. You couldn't understand it. You never had seven. (III, 17- 18, author's emphasis)

Mother's argument is maybe the most convincing and serious one regarding birth control. It should not be a matter of fashion, as Glaspell suggests through Nora's words quoted earlier, but the fruit of experience and careful consideration. Mother, the one who has experienced the burdens of a large family, is the one who talks more sensitively about birth control. Echoing Nora's standpoint to become a mother when she has time, as well as Margaret's concern in *Bernice* and even Claire's in *The Verge*, Mother proposes a new hymn for birth control saying "Don't call them from heaven/ Till earth has a home" (III, 13). The hymn sounds comical as one imagines a birth control hymn being chanted in a church. But Mother's point that children should only come to life as long as they have a home is totally a serious one and perfectly summarises Glaspell's use of the image of the unborn child in close connection with dramatic geopathology.

To sum up, with *Trifles*, *The Verge* and *Chains of Dew* Glaspell explores in different ways what Chaudhuri has later named the dramatic motif of the buried child. Glaspell's absent child characters are either buried or unborn. Their usefulness for the dramatic discourse of geopathology is multiple. Both the buried and the unborn child can be used to enlarge the feelings of isolation and stillness that provoke victimage of



location in some of Glaspell's female characters, as we have seen in *Trifles*. The unborn and buried child can also be used in geopathic drama to highlight the power that place exerts on human lives. Children characters die because the place they live in does not possess favourable conditions, as in *Inheritors* and also in *Trifles*. In other cases children are not born because female characters recognise that the places they have to raise their children in are problematic, as Claire argues in *The Verge*, Margaret in *Bernice* and Nora, Dotty and Mother in *Chains of Dew*. In these plays Glaspell uses the motif of the buried and unborn child as part of her feminist discourse, to defend the right that women should have over their own bodies to decide whether to be mothers or not, and thus to step out of their *place* as compulsory mothers. The following section focuses on the imagery of death in another of Glaspell's consistent dramatic locations: places of war. Places where characters who are as innocent as children are also buried.

### 6.3 Places of War

Dramatic representations of war have a direct impact on dramatic geopathology. Representations of wars onstage, as well as references to wars taking place in unlocalized offstage spaces, bring to mind a complex web of images of death that with different purposes will contribute to the dramatic development of a play. For instance, in *Blasted* (1995), Sarah Kane transforms a hotel room into a site of the Bosnian War to magnify the brutality her characters experience for being located in a war setting. It could be said that through death and destruction images, the aims of having off, and onstage war sites vary. Important for the discourse of geopathology, images of war are used to present damages done in certain places, which become inhospitable for onstage characters. Also, images of war can be used to remember the enormous conflicts that can take place because of fights for space. A larger version of the trope of invasion in dramatic geopathology, the imagery of wars shows place as a greater problem, involving thousands of people and larger extensions of land. In her novel *Norma Ashe* (1942), Glaspell says:

War could be gallant, but there was something gallant about the petty wars of so-called place, this constant war between people, trying to get ahead of somebody else, what that someone else had a life a good deal like your own. If they would only stop and *think*, she thought – think how that other life is really your life, for both are part of a whole: when you destroy someone else you

destroy a part of yourself. There could be so much happy life on the earth – the big rich beautiful earth, our home. (1942: 102-103, author's emphasis)

In Glaspell's words, wars are bigger expressions of the common daily struggles for place. Ordinary individual struggles to alter the orders of territoriality become armed country-wide struggles that deter the earth from being a happy home.

Wars occupy an important place in Susan Glaspell's work. In many of her short stories, novels and plays war is treated not only as a historical background but also as a literary device to set in motion the development of characters and plot. In novels such as *Prodigal Giver* (*Judd Rankin's Daughter*) (1946) and short stories such as "The Escape" (1920), Glaspell depicts boys coming back from wars suffering from physical and psychological wounds. In her 1920 short story "The Nervous Pig," she refers to war thus: "And then there are the countries that get so rasped having democracy that they eat up the squealing pigs to which democracy has given birth!" (1920: 314), "War is civilization eating her own little pigs" (1920: 316). Nevertheless, Glaspell's position to war is unfixed. Linda Ben-Zvi has pointed out that Glaspell "was not a pacifist. She simply believed that America was not best served by its intervention, particularly since it deflected attention from pressing issues at home such as suffrage, child care, and labor rights; and it caused the government to stifle debate and trample free speech in the name of patriotism" (2005: 189). Nevertheless, Ben-Zvi's standpoint seems to refer merely to international wars, such as the World Wars. But Glaspell also deals with American wars in her plays. Moreover, it could be said that Glaspell changed her position towards war with World War II. Indeed, in a later article, Ben-Zvi affirms that in many of her works Glaspell "expresses her pacifism, a position she held until America's entry into the Second World War, which she strongly supported" (2006: 280). Consequently, in the same manner that Glaspell seems to have a dual position regarding wars, this duality is reflected in her works. I agree with Mary E. Papke when she says that "from the prevalence of this subject in her work, one might almost call hers an obsession with war as both destroyer and possibility" (2006a: 81). Papke draws a very interesting connection between Glaspell's war obsession and the philosophical and literary traditions she could be considered part of:

This dual sense of war aligns her with the wartime transcendentalist Walt Whitman, Great War female modernists as various as H. D. and Edna St. Vincent Millay, with the Inhumanist poet Robinson Jeffers, and in intriguing ways with the men and women of the Chicago school of American pragmatism, which movement itself has tenacious roots in transcendentalism. (2006a: 81)

As part of the dramatic discourse of geopathology, this section will argue that with *Inheritors*, a play clearly influenced by Transcendentalism, Glaspell denounces any armed conflict, while with her later *Springs Eternal*, she defends the United States' duty to participate in World War II. The reason behind Glaspell's interventionist position in this case has a clear spatial dimension: the United States was physically menaced after Pearl Harbor. Jasper Deeter had been producing *Inheritors* in his Hedgerow theatre for some time. Five days after Pearl Harbor, Glaspell sent him a letter urging him to stop producing her anti-war play until the war ended:

I think our country [is] in greater danger than ever before in history – that all we hold dear, all worth living for, is threatened. The light might go out – and for generations to come. I would not have words of mine – even though unjustly, for those words were not spoken of this time – give support to those who oppose this war which has been forced upon us. (Glaspell qtd. in Ben-Zvi 2005: 380)

J. Ellen Gainor has observed that another reason that could have led Glaspell to support intervention in World War II is that she, as many other intellectuals, felt she had failed younger generations: “In the 1910s she and her fellow radicals were at the forefront of activism, and her stage could be the site of genuine political critique. Now, however, she was part of [the older] generation, perhaps questioning both the impact of her earlier work and her potential to make any further meaningful cultural or political contributions” (2001: 253). This is why Glaspell decided then to contribute to the war effort also in more material terms. She donated the memorial plaque to George Cram Cook that used to hang on the Provincetown Playhouse: “Here is twelve pounds of bronze resting in this house as a memorial when the America he loved, as we all love it, has desperate need of the metal in winning the war and shaping the better world of his old dream” (Glaspell qtd. in Gainor 2001: 250). The present section will focus more specifically on *Inheritors* and *Springs Eternal*, because either regarding Glaspell's anti-war or interventionist positions, the dramatic use of wars in her plays help to see place

as a problem. As J. Ellen Gainor has said, Glaspell's "dramas reflect the impact of the wars on a specifically American milieu: on the individual character, on social morality, on the commitment to action, and on a sense of national history and its foundational principles" (2001: 9). In other words, the importance of the analysis of images of war in Glaspell's plays for the present analysis of geopathology relies on the impact of these images on the places represented.

It is interesting to note that in one of Glaspell's early plays she suggests the status of wars as icons of pride, implying that participations in wars have always helped families to have a distinguished *place* in society.<sup>22</sup> In *Close the Book* the Roots have a prominent position in the community because they are descendants of John Peyton, who fought with George Washington in the Battle of Valley Forge (70), a battle that represents "the bitter hardship of the 1777-78 winter encampment" in the American Revolution (Jacobson 1995: 11). The portrait of Peyton dressed as a revolutionary soldier that hangs on the wall symbolises the importance he has within the family. The Roots' ancestors also participated in another of the great American wars: the American Civil War. Peter Byrd was "One of those dare-devils whose leg was shot under him at Bull Run" (83). Bull Run was a hard battle in the Civil War, part of "The litany of disastrous encounters [that] still brings tears of emotion to citizens of both the North and South" (Jacobson 1995: 52). As Glaspell makes Senator Byrd be so proud of his ancestor, she is questioning this character's happiness for his ancestor's injury, his shot leg, at the same time. Thus, very briefly in *Close the Book* Glaspell interrogates the audience about the respectability and coherence of the proud celebrations of wars as parts of heritage and how wars have given some people their high status in society.

In *Inheritors* Glaspell shows, more specifically, how wars had given some of her characters the physical place they are located in. In this play, Glaspell's characters bring the theme of war onstage: the American Revolution, the Civil War, the Black Hawk War, the World War I, the Hungarian Revolution and the contemporary conflict in India under British rule. The reunion of all these conflicts serves Glaspell to question the purpose, heroism and outcome of war. Regarding geopathology, Glaspell shows in this play how wars are conflicts for space. Thus, place is used dramatically as a problem

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<sup>22</sup> The Roots' pride in their heritage has been analysed in Chapter 5.1, pp. 199- 200.

because the fight for its occupations leads to death. As pointed out in Chapter 3, the Black Hawk War (1832) played a vital role in the distribution of the Mississippi land that, as Glaspell emphasised, once belonged to the Sacs, who, furthermore, were willing to share it with the white colonisers.<sup>23</sup> But the whites wanted the whole land for them, and thus the confrontations began. “Didn’t want to give up their land – but I’ve noticed something of the same nature in white folks” (104), says Grandmother Morton. Many years later, Silas Morton would admit all the wrongs done to the Native Americans. Silas, as observed earlier in this thesis,<sup>24</sup> feels he cannot be the absolute owner of this land: “I love land – this land. I suppose that’s why I never have the feeling that I own it” (112). “To look out at the hill sometimes makes me ashamed” (111). Indeed, in the first typewritten draft of *Inheritors*, Glaspell makes much more obvious Silas’s remorse about how they treated Native Americans, his ownership of the hill causes him disgust: “There’s our crime,” he says,<sup>25</sup> a statement that, though erased from the final version of the play, survived implicitly in other affirmations Silas issues. Silas is a geopathic character in this concern because, contrary to the Roots in *Close the Book*, he cannot enjoy the place he has, given that to own this land many Native Americans and whites alike died. In order to “assuage his guilt about taking land away from the Indians” (Noe 1983: 42), Silas reaches a symbolic treaty in spatial terms: “I got to give it back – their hill. I give it back to joy – a better joy – joy o’ aspiration. [...] Then maybe I can lie under the same sod with the red boys and not be ashamed” (118). Grandmother Morton sees the problem that would arise in giving this land: “What’s all that got to do with giving up the land that should provide for your own children?” (117). To solve his problem with place, Silas has to convince the other characters that materialism, symbolised in the ownership of the hill, is much less important than idealism. “Isn’t it providing for them to give them a better world to live in?” Silas wonders (117). With his act of giving up his land Silas shows that there are more important things in life than owning a piece of land. He wants to show that giving back the hill means reconciling with the Native Americans, making the world a fairer and better place for everybody to live in.

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<sup>23</sup> See pp. 118- 121.

<sup>24</sup> See p. 122.

<sup>25</sup> Typescript. Susan Glaspell Papers. Berg Collection, New York Public Library.

In *Inheritors* Glaspell also exemplifies the fight for space in the celebrations of the Fourth of July, the day the play opens. As is well-known, the American Revolution was fought so that Americans could rule over their territory, putting an end to British dominance. Glaspell presents the American Revolution onstage as Silas and Felix come from the parade wearing their army uniforms and carrying their muskets. Silas's rheumatism and, above all, Fejevary's empty left sleeve are powerful images of the casualties of war, making us question the results and heroism of war. Furthermore, when men gather to celebrate Independence Day, what they normally do is to talk about the Civil War:

GRANDMOTHER MORTON: Oh, celebration, that's just the beginning of it. Might as well set down. When them boys that fought together all get in one square – they have to swap stories all over again. That's the worst of war – you have to go on hearing about it so long. Here it is – 1879 – and we haven't taken Gettysburg yet. Well, it was the same way with the war of 1832. (105)

As Grandmother Morton regrets: “Seems nothing draw men together like killing other men” (196). However, despite the men's common eagerness and delight in talking about past wars, the pioneers Glaspell presents onstage do not want to talk about it. They are not completely proud of the fight for space they participated in. Silas says in this concern, “The war? Well, we did do that. But all that makes me want to talk about what's to come – what 'twas all for. Great things are to come” (112). Through Silas, Glaspell makes her point that war for freedom was necessary, but what matters now is to achieve a peaceful future. Glaspell visually turns these two old pioneers, Silas and Fejevary, into pacifists. These war veterans have brought balloons for their kids, Silas ties them to his gun, anticipating the 1960s Hippy image of daisies and guns. In Glaspell's image, the gay festivity balloons, as flowers would do in the 1960s, symbolically attempt to erase the lethal capability of bullets.

Though the pioneer characters in the first act of *Inheritors* seem to have solved the problem of place, the peaceful future these pioneers dream of becomes vain in the subsequent acts. World War I has taken place, leaving thousand of corpses behind and prompting the American urge to keep its space isolated from the rest of the world. Morton College, built on Silas's hill as a symbol of reconciliation, paradoxically supported the war in order to meet the government approval for financial reasons.

Trying to gain Senator Lewis's favour, Fejevary the Second proudly claims that "Morton College did her part in winning the war" (119). Morton College students became strike breakers during the Steel Mill strike, and then they enrol in the reserve Officers' Training Corps as an extra curricular activity. The College also applauds youths who died in the Great War, such as Fred, Silas's grandson and Madeline's brother. The excuse for participation in World War I was, in President Wilson's words, to "make the world safe for democracy" (154), a motto several characters employ as a learned verbal excuse, and which is still employed nowadays to support wars; the idea that the United States had to join the war in order to make the world a better place to live in. Only Madeline openly denounces the nonsense of war. She has serious doubts about her brother's reasons for joining the army:

MADELINE: Fred had – all kinds of reasons for going to France. He wanted a trip. (*answering his exclamation*) Why, he *said* so. Heavens, Fred didn't make speeches about himself. Wanted to see Paris – poor kid, he never did see Paris. Wanted to be with a lot of fellows – knock the Kaiser's block off – end war, get a French girl. It was all mixed up – the way things are. But Fred was a pretty decent sort. I'll say so. He had such kind, honest eyes. (140, author's emphasis)

In Madeline's words it seems that what Fred wanted was to exert his right to the American Myth of Mobility, to go to Europe. Participating in the war was just his means to get away from the Midwest. Similarly, the same reasons led John to Europe in Glaspell's novel *Prodigal Giver* (*Judd Rankin's Daughter*): "John had wanted to give himself to a war to end war and make the world safe for democracy. Also he wanted to have some fun and be with a lot of fellows – might as well see it straight. John wouldn't care to be slobbered over. Maybe he even had a sneaking desire to be a hero – and for that matter who hasn't?" (1946: 47). In *Inheritors*, talking about the last night he spent with his son Fred, Ira says, "He talked about the world – better world – end war. Now he's in his grave – I hope he is – and look at the front page of the paper! No such thing – war to end war" (154). Fred's effort was worthless in the eyes of his father. He died, and the world has not turned into a better place, since armed conflicts for place still go on.

The last armed conflict Glaspell presents in *Inheritors* is a contemporary conflict in India, a conflict Glaspell employs to reveal a problem with place in this American

Midwest area. When the Hindu characters state publicly that they want India free from British rule, the most violent side of those Americans proud to call themselves “democratic” shows. These American characters ignore the fact that these Hindu characters are defending the same principle of independence that America defended in its Revolution, the principle celebrated each Fourth of July. Moreover, these mistreated characters remind the audience of Felix Fejevary the First, who had fought in the Hungarian revolution of 1848 to release Hungary from Austrian rule, and as he “fought his government [he] was banished from his country” (135). But Fejevary’s grandson, Horace, and Senator Lewis do not appreciate these alien characters’ rebellion, and still less when they dare to quote Abraham Lincoln to support their point.<sup>26</sup> The Hindu students are considered “dirty anarchist[s],” and “revolutionists,” and are expelled from Morton College as an anticipation of the deportation they will experience under the Sedition Act. Horace appears happy about their forthcoming deportation and death, since “when they get him [one of the Hindu students who will be deported] – (*movement as of pulling a rope*) They hang there” (122). It could be said that Glaspell uses the conflict in India as part of dramatic geopathology to show that Morton College is in itself a problematic place because it fails to recognise the fairness in the Hindus’ claim. What was fair for the United States and prompted the American Revolution is here considered an anarchist revolution. The United States had the right and duty to have their place for themselves, free from Britain. When the Hindu characters ask Morton College to support the independence of their country from Britain, they are hit, jailed and deported.

In *Springs Eternal*, Susan Glaspell takes back the theme of war, turning it into the main device to set the play in motion. Probably prompted by the crudity of World War II, in this play the imagery of death inherent to wars are not subtly suggested or briefly accounted for, but described in detail. Dr. Bill Parks, who is in New York recovering from a tour of duty in Africa, tells:

All over the world. Think of them. In holes. Crawling on their bellies. The mud. Mud’s not fun. You get awful sick of mud. Jammed together in the air – jammed on the sea and under the sea. It’s cold. It’s hot. It’s not the way you want it. Things bite you. There aren’t any girls and that’s

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<sup>26</sup> In Chapter 3.4.1 I discuss Glaspell’s dramatic use of Abraham Lincoln’s discourse. See pp. 114- 115.



not the way you want it. But there they are – all over the world. And his heart is breaking – because he has lost his faith in life . Let us pray. (I, 8)

The descriptions of these soldiers, trapped in holes, in the mud, an image Maria Irene Fornes would use years later to trap her characters in *Mud* (1983), dying in far off places, is very interesting regarding geopathology. It must be remarked that Glaspell reworks here images that usually appear in her works with positive qualities. Air and sea usually appear in Glaspell's works to symbolise freedom.<sup>27</sup> But in the quotation above, Glaspell turns the air and the sea into death domains. Glaspell uses Bill's description of this unlocalized offstage place of war, or even multiple places ("all over the world"), to set a sharp contrast to the onstage fictional place, the pleasant library where the characters carry on with their vain lives while soldiers die in far away locations. The connection of Bill's description of war to the New York house where the play is set is used by Glaspell to reveal how this war could have been avoided somehow, but it was the paralysed Americans who let their boys go to war. Glaspell puts this idea straightforwardly in Bill's words:

Listen, my nutty friends. You know something? Now I know why we had a war. People are like you. *You* are the people. You don't *care*. You go in a huddle about your gains and losses – chewing it over about the past – snatching for all you can get while things go from bad to worse and straight on to hell. What's the difference who loves whom among you three. You've had your chance. Snap out of it and give somebody else a show. [...] And what are we fighting for? Fellows are dying and you're chewing the rag about your silly little lives. All washed up and chewing the rag! (I, 32- 33, author's emphasis)

Through Bill, Glaspell denounces that boys are losing their lives, and that nobody seems to be doing anything to put a stop to that. The other characters in *Springs Eternal* spend their lives with useless chores, as if paralysed in space, as suggested briefly in Chapter 5.<sup>28</sup>

One of the dramatic effects of images of wars regarding geopathology is that they provoke a sense of paralysis on the onstage characters. It is relevant to note perhaps

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<sup>27</sup> See for instance my discussion of air and sea images in *The Verge*, analysed in Chapter 4.3, pp. 186-188.

<sup>28</sup> See pp. 236- 237.

that before showing paralysis in space as a geopathic effect and cause of war in *Springs Eternal*, Glaspell had explored this issue in *Bernice*. When the latter play opens, “*FATHER is seen sitting at a long table at the side of the stairway, playing solitaire. At the back of the cards, open books are propped against the wall, and papers on which he has been writing*” (159). Glaspell uses the solitaire game as part of dramatic geopathology to show paralysis together with isolation. World War I had proved the difficulties the world presented for the peaceful coexistence of all its inhabitants. One of the consequences World War I had to the United States was the establishment of a policy of isolation. To protect its space, the country had to close its boundaries.<sup>29</sup> Glaspell symbolises the isolationist policy the United States adopted in Father’s card game: the solitaire, a game that symbolically only needs one player.

The connection between the solitaire game, the books and papers which Father in *Bernice* works on, and war is made evident a bit later. Glaspell would also rework this connection later in *Springs Eternal*:

FATHER: She [Bernice] laughed at my spending the whole time of war studying Sanscrit [*sic*]. Well, why shouldn’t I? What can the old do about war? I had my vision of life. If that had been followed there’d be no war. But in a world that won’t have visions – why not study Sanscrit [*sic*] while such a world is being made over – into another such world. (163)

Detached from a world which does not share his “vision,” from a world that suffers from an utter blindness that only leads to wars and deaths, Father cannot find anything else to do to spend his time than studying Sanskrit and playing solitaire. Hinz-Bode believes that Glaspell employs Sanskrit to suggest “the futility of war”: “Bernice’s father studies Sanscrit in a withdrawal from the hopelessness engendered by World War I” (2006b: 103). Studying Sanskrit, however, has further implications. Sanskrit is the antique Indo Iranian language in which the sacred Hindu Brahman texts were written. As Glaspell would do in several of her works, and quite influenced by Cook’s love for Greece and the Classic times, it could be said that she is here making a call to the

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<sup>29</sup> For more information about the policy of isolation fostered by the government of the United States at this time see for instance Leuchtenberg 1958. For historical data about this policy of isolation and its reflection on the theatre of those days see Wainscott 1997. This historical context has already been presented in Chapter 4 of this thesis, when discussing Glaspell’s use of prisons in dramatic geopathology. See pp. 140- 141.

antique times of great creations, since Sanskrit was used as part of a long literary and religious tradition, in contrast to the present times of massive destruction. Moreover, the study of Sanskrit seems here important not only because it would open up, for Father in this case, a vast philosophical and literary knowledge which could help to solve or endure, at least spiritually, the present conflict (World War I.) But the study of Sanskrit is also important because it is the most archaic form of Indo European languages, the family which English also belongs to. Father's interest in Sanskrit also conjuncts Glaspell's call to go back to the roots in another way. Sanskrit, the Indo Iranian language, is a distant ancestor of the English language, establishing links among cultures and people that kill one another in wars. But taking into account that Father's work on Sanskrit is quite passive, given his defeatist position towards war, maybe the most important feature of Sanskrit is that it is a dead language, and unless something livelier is done with it, it will never contribute to make the world a better place. Paralysed, Father's only hope with Sanskrit is that one day it will be useful. As he asserts, the world needs "being made over – into another such a world," (163), a vision which will never materialise if everybody keeps on playing "solitaire."

Glaspell represents Owen's paralysis in space in *Springs Eternal* by using the same stage properties she used for Father in *Bernice*. As Kristina Hinz-Bode claims, "Recalling the character conception of the Father in *Bernice* (who had fled the reality of World War I in his study of Sanscrit) Owen is a disillusioned middle-aged writer who once believed in the power of the intellect to better the world, but who has now withdrawn to the study of 'languages long dead'" (2006b: 208). Putting these two plays together, it is interesting to notice Glaspell's remark that contrary to Father's hope that the world will be made over during World War I in *Bernice*, the world is still the same during World War II, as appears in *Springs Eternal*. Paralysis does not help at all to solve the problem of place. As Father in *Bernice*, Owen focuses on dead languages and games as means to "take [his] mind off" World War II (II, 1). Owen Higgenbotham appears onstage "*carrying books and papers*," which he displays on the table to work with (I, 9). Owen says, "Here I am with you – and I want to be with you, Margaret, in the old place, working on the good old ancient languages. Now that's a refuge in time of storm, don't you think?" (I, 11). Owen puts into words what Father in *Bernice* never articulated verbally, namely, that working on old languages is a shelter to avoid facing what is happening in the "modern" world, and that this is why he stays "in the old

place,” the place that keeps him secure from outside events such as war. Through Owen’s words, Glaspell reunites here many of the tropes and themes of dramatic geopathology: the character’s need to have a shelter, her/his rejection of the outside, and the support s/he finds in past and tradition. As a geopathic character, Owen tries to avoid the war problem in the outside place. Owen’s problem with place is not only that he is not contributing to eradicate the problem with the place outside his house, but also that with his refuge he is not making his house a better place for the time soldiers will come back from war. This point will be expanded later on.

In Owen’s case the contrast between his present hobby and what he did in the past is greater than in Father’s case, since he was a writer, aware of the power of modern and “living” languages. Indeed, his main work, entitled *World of Tomorrow*, is a book that made youths such as Freddie volunteer for the war (I, 16). But Owen has decided to “abandon tomorrow and go back to yesterday” (I, 17), since he feels he and his generation have failed the future: “But I still say the people who were supposed to be thinking were asleep at the library table – or wherever it is that they doze. It was their business to disturb the slumbers of others” (I, 18). In this manner, throughout Acts I and II, Owen is messing around with books and papers on the table and taking down notes for his study of dead languages, which consists in finding “the similarities and differences of languages long dead. My hope is it will deafen me to a living language” (II, 1). But unlike *Bernice*, where the absent protagonist found her father’s obsession with Sanskrit “amusing,” in *Springs Eternal* Glaspell creates a character, Mrs. Soames, whose own son is in the Pacific, to contest Owen’s defeatist resolution:

MRS SOAMES: (*with a sigh*) Somethings [*sic*] I suppose I just never will understand. Like why you would be writing in languages that are dead.

OWEN: (*with a little laugh, trying to regain his more usual manner*) I’m not actually writing in them. But about them.

MRS SOAMES: Are there those – at *this* time – want to read about languages that are dead?

OWEN: Yes, I think so – though mostly they are old and tired.

MRS SOMAES: I should think that would be alright for a person who couldn’t do anything else, or in odd moments, maybe – like playing checkers.

OWEN: First crossword puzzles, now we have checkers. (II, 8, author’s emphasis)

Mrs. Soames poses a vital question for the solution of war, and this is what the use of writing or reading about dead languages is. Owen's response suggests the uselessness of his task, since only those old and tired might be potential readers. Old and tired people like Owen himself. But Owen is not as old as Father in *Bernice*, for whom according to Mrs. Soames "that would be alright," in the same manner that playing little games is alright. Owen has proved he can write in living languages pieces of literature to awake people's feelings, so this is why Mrs. Soames cannot understand Owen's wasting of time. Instead, Mrs. Soames wants Owen to write again for the boys that are fighting. The following long dialogue is worth quoting in full:

MRS SOAMES: Those boys – so many of them. They must be wondering and wondering why they are there – those far and heathen places. They must look around and wonder how it ever came to pass. I'm afraid lots of them don't exactly know what it's all about. They're good boys – they went because it was their duty. But wouldn't it be awful to be doing your duty, and maybe losing your life, all the time hardly knowing why you were doing it. Knowing in a way, but not – all lighted up about it. You could do that. And that's why I don't understand the dead languages – for the old and tired, at just this time. I should think you would want to speak to the boys, Mr. Higgenbotham. In a language they could understand.

*(OWEN sits there a long moment; then he must fight what he feels.)*

OWEN: Now see here. What do you know about me, anyway? In the beginning – as a young man – it was these dead languages I studied and loved. They aren't dead, you know. They come to life. Men spoke them once, and those men come to life. Checkers and crosswords puzzles are pretty lifeless alongside dead languages. Never mind! I'll just say I spent a lot of time on them, and then I was seduced to the world around me. And I worked like a beaver for the world around me – believing it could be made a better world. You shouldn't approve of me, Mrs. Soames. I was called a radical and a firebrand – all sorts of hard names.

MRS SOAMES: If you are trying to make the world better does it matter what you are called?

OWEN: Now stop those things that sound so damned right and listen to what I am saying [...] Where did I *get*? I saw a vision and what came was a war. I saw life and what came was death. This was all brewing while I went on talking. We were the idealists, Mrs. Soames. We were the dreamers of dreams. And while we were dreaming the world went to hell. The least we can do is to shut up. (II, 9, author's emphasis)

With this dialogue, Glaspell helps to understand what has led Owen to become a geopathic character retreated to his shelter of dead languages. While Mrs. Soames wants him to write a book to give the boys a reason for war, Owen, representative of Glaspell's generation, can only think how he has failed them.

As Father in *Bernice*, Owen had a vision, dreams. But it was these dreams and visions which prevented him, and others like him, from realising that another war was coming. Dreams blinded the dreamers. Owen feels that his generation “brought on the war,” “those people in it who were supposed to be thinking things out,” “We betrayed you,” “We should be executed” (I, 17).<sup>30</sup> In this manner, Owen believes the best he can do is to shut up and do nothing about the war. Nevertheless, Owen suggests, as it could also be interpreted in Father’s case in *Bernice*, that dead languages have some good things to offer. Owen is right to assert that dead languages are by far more alive than crosswords and checkers, or more alive than Father’s solitaire game discussed above. Dead languages are not completely dead because they bring knowledge from the past, they make “men come to life,” and they emphasise, borrowing Gainor’s words, “the connection between ideas and the history of the language used to convey them” (2001: 260). Or as Hinz-Bode puts it, these dead languages were “once a living exchange with the past” in Owen’s study (2006b: 218). But, on the whole, Father and Owen are similar characters in their detachment from the world and in their defeatist behaviour. Though we could consider that their study of dead languages could somehow help to make the world better, Father and Owen are never seen onstage contributing to this goal. Margaret reprimands Owen strongly: “and what are you doing [to win the war]? Enveloping yourself in a noble sorrow – becoming a quaint sort of character – irascible – playful – over a broken heart. The hell with it! I can tell you it makes me sick – under the roof with it – day by day see it going on” (III, 8). The effect that war has on Owen, making him a geopathic character, triggers at the same time some geopathology in Margaret, living “under the same roof,” witnessing how her husband does nothing to solve the victimage of location almost the whole world is involved into during war.

In *Springs Eternal* it is not only Owen who rejoices in paralysis. But his ex-wife, Harry, also justifies paralysis while World War II is going on. Her claim is that “it is our duty to go on with our lives, so that what the boys are fighting for will be right here for them when they come back” (III, 9), and thus Harry spends her days writing her

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<sup>30</sup> I agree with Gainor’s observation that one of the most serious problems with *Springs Eternal* is Owen’s ambiguous perspectives on war. He is presented as a utopian idealist, and the main proof would be his book *World of Tomorrow*. But throughout the play “there is a general lack of specificity about the content or direction” of the views Owen expressed in his book (2001: 253). And the fact that this book made boys, such as Fred Soames, enlist blurs the idea we had formed about its content and Owen’s view on war. Moreover, Glaspell also makes him depart from idealism as she makes him say, “I have *always* said we had to fight this war” (II, 16, author’s emphasis) and as he forces his son Jumbo to enlist.

worthless memoirs under the title “I Wear Pink,” recalling her childhood trauma of wearing a dress of this colour when she wanted to wear a blue one. But as advanced earlier, it is relevant for dramatic geopathology that these boys should not come back to the same place they left. They should not come back to a stage space whose key stage properties are vain notes on dead languages and memoirs, puzzles and checkers. It is the complacency of this place that made these boys go to war. As Gainor says,

Glaspell works throughout the play to establish the link between ‘over there’ and ‘back here.’ She depicts both the importance of the image of America and democracy the soldiers so desperately need to sustain morale and the reality of ambivalence many at home feel whose lives have not been directly touched by the conflict. (2001: 251)

The absent soldier characters must come back to a better place, to a place, a “here,” where those characters who stayed will have been working to prevent any further confrontations for space. It could be said that Glaspell’s point is that while there is a war going on, it is not fair that those characters who stay at home keep busy by doing unsubstantial things, while they should be working for a better future. There is victimage of location because during war, the “here” goes on with idle contemplation, while “out there” soldiers are losing their lives.

An interesting dramatic device Glaspell uses to explore the confrontation between the paralysed life “back here” and the war taking place “over there” is her characters’ position towards conscientious objection.<sup>31</sup> As discussed above, most of the characters in *Springs Eternal* are paralysed in space and they do not help to solve the problem of place that war is. It must be noted that although at no point they reject the necessity of war, they regret the situation in the Pacific, “A terrible place for an American boy to be. And so far from home – all jungle – and Japs” (I, 16). When they learn that Fred Soames has been caught, they are conscious of the mortal consequences and impact that war has on the people they love. Paradoxically, all of them, except

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<sup>31</sup> J. Ellen Gainor observes that Glaspell’s treatment of conscientious objection also reveals her interventionist position: “Fred Jordan, the conscientious objector who is the absent center in *Inheritors*, is made a martyr figure for his beliefs, but in the later play Freddie, a soldier, is the idealized individual, and not Harold” (2001: 257). Indeed, Harold’s/Jumbo’s choice is devoid of any heroism as, unlike Fred Jordan in *Inheritors*, he is not in a prison cell on bread and water, but apparently being fairly treated in the Civilian Public Service camps. As Gainor says, “there is no evidence in this play of his mistreatment or details involving any other objectors” (2001: 257).

Margaret and Mrs. Soames, still think of Jumbo as a “coward” for being a conscientious objector. As the government moves Jumbo from one state to another, from camp to camp, Stewie chases him because he “hate[s] conscientious objectors” and “must come to the rescue” (III, 19). As advanced in Chapter 5 as part of the generation conflict in this play,<sup>32</sup> when Jumbo appears onstage, he is utterly ostracized by his family, the same family that, ironically, does nothing to put an end to the war.

Most members of his family turn their home into a hostile place for Jumbo, making him a geopathic character. The apparently homely library room where the play is set is ready to capture a victim of location. Very early in the play Margaret had suggested this idea: “While a peace-pipe is being smoked in one corner of the room, knives are being sharpened at this fireplace” (I, 3), and “I fear this house isn’t going to be much of a refuge in the next few days” (I, 12). Jumbo comes back to a home that is not a shelter, and where knives have been sharpened against him. Owen cannot be in the same room as Jumbo is, he regrets “bringing him into the world” and mocks him by calling him “Jumbo,” instead of his real name Harold, for his short size (II, 13). Even more, Glaspell also shows spatially the effect of the offstage war on the stage when Jumbo dares to make “minor changes” in Owen’s library (III, 1). He has re-arranged his father’s books to make room for his painting. As Hinz-Bode says, “Owen – in a rage over his son’s ‘cowardly’ decision to become conscientious objector – storms into the room” and tears Jumbo’s picture, what can be interpreted as Owen’s attempt to show that he does not allow any different position towards war (2006b: 213). Harry, Jumbo’s mother, continuously tells him to go to war, and Dottie, who apparently loves him, will not talk to him until he fulfils his patriotic duty. When Jumbo announces that he has renounced his objection and that he is departing that very night, he is then applauded. Nevertheless, the reasons Jumbo has for joining the war have nothing to do with killing “enemies.” Naïvely enough, he hopes he will not need to kill anybody. He feels encouraged to do it because of his family, but also because he wants to feel he is part of the world. In other words, he enlists so that his home can really be his *home*, and so that the world accepts him as an integrating part. As he says, “You see, all the time I knew it had to be done by somebody. So it would be right for somebody else to do it for me – when maybe he wouldn’t like it any better than I did?” (III, 22). Jumbo does not enlist

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<sup>32</sup> See pp. 236- 237.



because he wants to kill, or because he thinks it is right. But because he is part of the world and now that there is a war on, he has to take his part as many boys did before him. Jumbo's words echo Glaspell's belief at that time that, "The war makes a difference and it is better to be part of the time, where you feel one of the crowd"<sup>33</sup> (qtd. in Ben-Zvi 2005: 382- 383). Glaspell shows how Jumbo understands that he has to help to solve the problem with the struggle for place if he wants to live in a blossoming expression of *topophilia*. Borrowing Hinz-Bode's words, "Suddenly finding himself *in* the world of human community instead of on the outside, Jumbo feels he has no choice but to participate in the exchange that makes reality" (2006b: 215, author's emphasis.)

A key aspect to understand the role of images of war within the dramatic discourse of geopathology is that war times should be employed to radically change places that had proved problematic, to start over again, and to work on place-improvement, on *topophilia*. This argument may seem contradictory at first sight; given that in my previous discussion I have argued how Glaspell employs wars to talk about negative and mortal struggles for space and how they affect characters through paralysis. However, I agree with Barbara Ozieblo's point that, "Although [Glaspell] at no point condones the war, she accepts its inevitability as part of the process of improving the world" (2000: 270- 271). Though Ozieblo refers to *Springs Eternal*, I will also discuss how this is precisely the case in *The Verge*. Indeed, Glaspell's conception of war as a means to improve the world conforms to the ideology behind Modernism. In *No Man's Land* (1988) the feminist scholars Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar discuss the connection between women writers and World War I. They explore the influence that this war had on modernist women, who after considering World War I as an apocalypse found new ways through the different possibilities that, regarding form and themes, Modernism offered. In *The Verge*, characters talk about World War I in these terms:

CLAIRE: Yes! (*as often, the mocking thing gives true expression to what lies sombrely in her*)

The war. There was another gorgeous chance.

HARRY: Chance for what? I call you, Claire. I ask you to say what you mean.

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<sup>33</sup> Linda Ben-Zvi has noted that this remark marks the different positions Glaspell held in World War I and World War II, since during World War I, as can be seen in *Inheritors*, "it was the compact majority whom she most feared" (2005: 383).

CLAIRE: I don't know – precisely. If I did – there'd be no use saying it. [...] Yes. But the war didn't help. Oh, it was a stunning chance! But fast as we could – scuttled right back to the trim little thing we'd been shocked out of.

HARRY: You bet we did – showing our good sense.

CLAIRE: Showing our incapacity – for madness.

HARRY: Oh, come now, Claire – snap out of it. You're not really trying to say that capacity for madness is a good thing to *have*?

CLAIRE: (*in a simpler surprise*) Why yes, of course.

DICK: But I should say the war did leave enough madness to give you a gleam of hope.

CLAIRE: Not the madness that – breaks through. And it was – a stunning chance! Mankind masses to kill. We have failed. We are through. We will destroy. Break this up – it can't go farther. In the air above – in the sea below – it is to kill! All we had thought we were – we aren't. We were shut in with what wasn't so. Is there one ounce of energy has not gone to this killing? Is there one love not torn in two? Throw it in! Now? Ready? Break up. Push. Harder. Break up. And then – and then – But we didn't say – 'And then – ' The spirit didn't take the tip. (70, author's emphasis)

Claire, the geopathic character of *The Verge* who needs to escape from her place, recognises the possibilities that World War I offered to start everything anew. World War I destroyed the world physically, and so was its ideological schema. This is why Claire so euphorically uses the words “destroy,” “break,” “Push. Harder. Break up.” Claire rejoices in the image of the complete destruction of such a problematic world, since the world could only be reborn after its complete destruction. “Mankind masses to kill” means that humankind had reached its limit, and also that conflicts for space would always take place unless the world were reorganised from top to bottom. World War I was “‘a stunning chance’ for a totally new beginning. [...] It would be a mass explosion of forms, a Dionysian destruction, explosion, thunder and lightning” (Sichert 1997: 282). In Sichert words, Claire echoes “Heraclites’s truth – highly esteemed by Nietzsche – ‘War is the father of all good things’” (1997: 284). Glaspell conjoins wars and madness as a means to escape geopathology. Madness must be understood here as Claire does, as any deviation from the traditional and constraining forms that society accepts,<sup>34</sup> “all the good things” that were to come after massive destruction. As Madeline says in *Inheritors*, “The war must have been a godsend to people who were in danger of getting on to themselves” (150- 151). Wars demonstrate that there is no use in creating shelters, since the problems of the outside will transcend any boundaries.

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<sup>34</sup> Chapter 7.2 focuses on Claire’s “madness.” See pp. 315- 316 for further analysis.

Unlike Harry in *The Verge*, who celebrates “our good sense,” which mainly means coming back to the old things, “the trim little thing we’d been shocked out of,” Claire is the only one to realise that this coming back to old things will be but the starting point for new conflicts, as subsequent wars would demonstrate. At this point, Claire resembles Ira Morton in *Inheritors*, who regrets that “the world he [his son] died for all hate and war. Waste. Waste. Nothin’ but waste” (154). As has been observed, most of the characters in Glaspell’s *The Verge* “have learned nothing from the war and have attempted to carry on with business as usual, almost as if the violence of the war were a spoiled dish that could be discarded, allowing us to return to the same meal at the same table” (Wainscott 1997: 28).

It could be said that, through the role Glaspell provides to images of wars in her works, the whole world can be regarded as an enormous geopathic place, for wars cannot be avoided. As Frances, the protagonist of *Prodigal Giver* (*Judd Rankin’s Daughter*), the novel version of *Springs Eternal*, regrets, wars repeat one after another because of certain pathology inherent to the world. She puts this thought in the following comic, but serious at the same time, way:

From time to time Frances would think of a report that might be made on planet Earth by someone observing from another planet. ‘Scientifically they are advanced,’ this report might read, ‘but what they want is destroying one another. Every so often they try to kill themselves off, as if their attainment must be put to this purpose. It is a criminal instinct of which they cannot rid themselves, and this planet best be avoided. (1946: 134)

But Frances also hopes America can be turned into a better place for their boys to come back, and she also hopes everybody will be doing their best to avoid war, so that all of us, as she implies, deserve the world we live in:

*All those boys – all their laughs and perplexities, good boys, doing their best. We had something to do for them here at home, made ready for them, happy return to a world which would be worth what they gave to it. She thought of the boys who gave all they had and would never return to the job and the girl. We should be thinking of them, making ourselves worth what they did. How very true – this moment true – these dead should not have died in vain [...] Wise men must plan, but they might plan till kingdom come and there’d be no peace unless each one of us earned it – right in his own heart earned place. It was not a thing another could do for you anymore than another could save your soul. (1946: 134, author’s emphasis)*

In *Springs Eternal* Glaspell explicitly voices through one of her characters that “something is wrong with the world” (III, 23), and it has to be re-done all over. So it is not only that soldiers must come back to a better home, as argued earlier in this section, but that this is the time when the whole world should be mended. Jumbo explains this through one of his paintings:

JUMBO: You see this color breaking through the gray sky?

OWEN: Yes – yes – I see it.

JUMBO: Just put your fingers on the color – cover it – and I’ll show you.

HARRY: Is this important?

OWEN: (*trying to do as Jumbo has told him*) Yes.

JUMBO: Now you can see the sky is too dark. I thought it would be good for the sunflowers – but it just buried the shed.

OWEN: (*eager to understand*) Y- es –

JUMBO: Now take your fingers off. There! Don’t you see? Even though it isn’t right yet you can see how it was all coming together!

OWEN: All – coming together. (III, 12)

At the beginning Owen thinks that his son’s art is a waste of time in the face of war, another proof of his son’s cowardice, but he will soon understand that Jumbo’s canvas constitutes a metaphor of the world. In Jumbo’s explanation of his painting, one can see his dream that the world be repaired and no more struggles for space take place. The world, as the sky in Jumbo’s painting, was too dark, lost. Then war came. War is embodied in “the color breaking through the sky”, shattering the uniformity of the grey sky. But though this colour is something disruptive, as war is, it makes “all coming together.” This is not Glaspell’s apology for the war, but it could be said that she might be implying that the war, as Claire in *The Verge* also says, is an opportunity for unity. As Hinz-Bode comments on Jumbo’s painting, “each element of the painting stands in relation to all its other elements, and if one thing is changed in order to ‘correct’ a certain relation, other connections are inevitably influenced” (2006b: 213). The world should unite and fix it so that there is no need of any other war, as Jumbo indeed says. Jumbo’s idea for his next painting, the one he dreams of completing when he comes back from war, stands for this hope. He describes it as follows: “I want to do my horses. (*Anxiously*) I hope I don’t forget. (*As if making notes for himself*) Very tired – last strength of the day. Rough ground – *pulling*. *Really* pulling. Quite dark below – where

they are – earth darkening – and wide luminous sky” (III, 13, author’s emphasis). Jumbo is again using darkness and roughness to represent the collapsed state of the world. But in the world of his canvas, he imagines his horses pulling hard for the promise of a wide luminous sky. He hopes his father will become one of these pulling horses that will find the way to make the world better once the war is over. When Jumbo announces that he is joining the army, he wants to reach the compromise that “people like you – ought to fix it so there won’t be any more wars” (III, 22). He is joining the army, but he wants those staying at home to contribute to the solution of the world’s problem with place that has provoked this war. The ending of *Springs Eternal*, as analysed in the final chapter of this thesis, will show how characters come to understand that they cannot leave the world as it is while their boys are dying in wars. They will work together for the construction of a better place to live.

To sum up, this section has focused on the importance of war for the dramatic discourse of geopathology in Susan Glaspell’s plays. While no war site is seen onstage, it could be said that the importance of images of war in Glaspell’s plays relates to the effect these images exert on her stage spaces and her characters. These dramatic effects of images of war for geopathology are multiple. The most basic use of images of war related to geopathology is that wars are struggles for space, to gain and defend territories. In more abstract terms, the relationship Glaspell establishes between wars and place is that, accounting for some nationalistic pride and sense of history, some of her characters have an important *place* in society because of their, or their ancestors’, participation in wars, as it is clear in *Close the Book*. In more specific terms, Glaspell shows the physical connection between wars and location, since some other of her characters get the actual place they live in after their, or their ancestors’, participation in wars, as in *Inheritors*. The analysis of wars in dramatic geopathology also reveals that Glaspell uses them to make us think about how wars paralyse people in safe places, while they should be actively working for a better future, materialised in better places to dwell in, as in *Bernice* and *Springs Eternal*. As Glaspell suggests in many of her plays, but more explicitly in *The Verge* and *Springs Eternal*, war is a means of improvement. This analysis of the contribution of images of war to geopathology has inevitably opened the concept of geopathology from the figure of home to the whole world. While characters have their own problems with place in their house, Glaspell shows her characters’ duty to solve the problem of place at a greater dimension, embodied in her

treatment of World War I and World War II and their aftermaths. In the plays analysed in this section Glaspell's onstage homes cannot be happy places unless their dwellers reconcile with the problem of place also outside their walls. The following section looks at homes where characters have to come to terms with problems within their walls. The specific problem in this case relates to absent characters who have granted their homes with an atmosphere contributing to the victimage of location of the onstage characters.

#### **6.4 Haunted Rooms: The Absent Characters' Contribution to Victimage of Location**

Several critics agree that one of Glaspell's greatest dramatic achievements is her creation of absent protagonists, who are embodied and very present in spatial terms. For instance, Arthur Watermann believes that "Susan Glaspell's most effective and most characteristic dramatic technique was centering a play around an off-stage character," since "Somehow this generates a peculiar tension, like a hushed whisper that grows stronger as the play progresses" (1966: 88). Glaspell employs this technique mainly in three of her plays: Minnie Wright is the absent protagonist in *Trifles*, Bernice in the play of the same title, and Alison in *Alison's House*. Though these characters are never seen (Minnie is in jail, while Bernice and Alison are dead), their presence is felt onstage in the spaces they inhabited. In this respect, Gerhard Bach has pointed out that with *Trifles* and *Alison's House* "Glaspell investigates the impact of an offstage character on those who, physically and spiritually, invade her formerly (self-) protected space. In both, the search onstage for clues [...] brings to life the offstage character" (1995: 247). The same principle applies to *Bernice*, though the status of these spaces as "self-protected" is not that clear, as has been discussed in previous sections of this thesis. Similarly, Jackie Czerepinski believes that "Absence has a gravitational force, drawing the other characters to the physical and psychic spaces left by their protagonist" (1995: 149). Starting from this point, the present section focuses on how Glaspell constructs haunted spaces, that is, fictional homes where the presence of the absent characters is felt to suggest a sense of victimage of location regarding these absent protagonists, and how their presences become an integrating element for the development of geopathology in the present characters.

Glaspell's main technique to suggest the absent character's presence onstage is through her handling of stage properties and pieces of furniture that belong to the absent protagonist. In *Trifles*, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters are able to reconstruct Minnie's life and feeling through the configuration of her disordered room. A reconstruction apparently easy for them, given that, as argued at different points in this thesis, they share the same chores. As seen previously, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters feel Minnie in the rocking chair, in the canary, in the broken cage, in her quilt, and in her unfinished work: the bread, the dirty towels, the disordered pans, and the broken jars of preserves.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters reconstruct Minnie's life through the way they feel Minnie's properties. As some critics have observed, in *Trifles*, "[u]ltimate knowledge comes from feeling, from an understanding based on shared experience and identification" (Czerepinski 1995: 148), "the women's method is intuitive and empathetic" (Hallgreen 1995: 206), and "that empathy, coming from an identification with the other, can offer a kind of knowledge that is different than simply feeling the emotion of sympathy" (Bryan 2006: 64). It is at this point that one could talk about Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters as geopathic characters. As they go "through a process of identification" with Minnie (Mustazza 1989: 495), Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters constantly draw parallels between the life they think Minnie had and their own lives. Then, it could be said that besides Minnie's alleged geopathology, what the audience can really see onstage is Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters's own victimage of location. That is the reason why, as seen in Chapter 3, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters defend Minnie and Minnie's place so much, because they are defending themselves through Minnie's case. Turning to the scene about the preserves, this is representative of how Glaspell maintains Minnie's presence through a stage property to reveal the onstage female characters' victimage of location:

MRS. PETERS: (*to the other woman*) Oh, her fruit; it did freeze. (*to the LAWYER*) She worried about that when it turned so cold. She said the fire'd go out and her jars would break. (38)

MRS. HALE: It's a shame about her fruit. I wonder if it's all gone. (*gets up on the chair and looks*) I think there's some here that's all right, Mrs. Peters. Yes- here; (*holding it toward the window*) this is cherries, too. (*Looking again*) I declare I believe that's the only one. (*gets down, bottle in her hand. Goes to the sink and wipes it off on the outside*) She'll feel

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<sup>35</sup> See pp. 84- 88, 138- 139, and 157- 158.

awful bad after all her hard work in the hot weather. I remember the afternoon I put up my cherries last summer. (39)

What begins as a comment on how bad Minnie will feel when she learns about her spoiled preserves, turns into a reflection upon Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters's hard work and gender politics. Preserves are not only important for Minnie, but for any pioneer woman, because the sustenance of the farm in these far places depended heavily on the provision of food. In this manner, the reasons why Minnie's preserves are lost are subtly questioned by the other two women. Certainly, the bottles of preserves have been spoiled by the cold weather,<sup>36</sup> but as Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters see it, it is not only the appalling outside climatic conditions that have destroyed Minnie's work, but the broken stove also has a lot to do with it. According to the distribution of work within the farm, mending the broken stove was supposed to be Mr. Wright's task. Had the stove worked properly, that is, had John mended it, Minnie's preserves would have been safe. The importance of this stove is much more explicit in the story *A Jury of her Peers*, where Mrs. Hale indeed says, "[t]he law is the law, and a bad stove is a bad stove" (1917: np). In this manner, she justifies Minnie's alleged murder of her husband as well as their, i.e. Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters's, illegal behaviour when they take clues from the crime scene at the end of the play. As Mrs. Hale's words imply, if the law is made by men and to protect men, and men are going to condemn Minnie, women have to find their own way to defend themselves. If men's law would condemn Minnie, Mrs. Hale finds in the broken stove another reason for condemning John and for understanding Minnie's alleged criminal act.

Minnie's presence on the farm is further emphasised as some of her belongings are brought onstage. Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters show Minnie's clothes to the audience, helping to recreate a physical reconstruction of the absent character. As Minnie had requested, the two other women take a pair of shoes, an apron and some clothes, a petticoat, a skirt and a dress; which the women examine in detail, leading them to conclude that "Wright was close" (40). They conclude so because Minnie's clothes are "shabby" (40), in contrast to the pretty clothes Mrs. Hale remembered Minnie in, a white dress with blue ribbons that characterised Minnie when she was single and sang in the choir (40). The way Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters reconstruct Minnie's physical

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<sup>36</sup> This issue, the cold weather, has been analysed regarding isolation in Chapter 4.1, see p. 136.



appearance is vital to see how Glaspell uses them to lead the audience's thoughts until we agree that Minnie had a problem with the place she lived in, and this fact partly justifies her alleged murder. Minnie's shabby clothes brought to the stage help to see Minnie as a trapped character, trapped in a poor and isolated place from where she could not escape, in contrast to her lively white and blue outfit when she was single and could move outside the farm to attend the mass.

In the same way that Glaspell suggests the problems Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters could have with their places through the preserves, Mrs. Hale's and Mrs. Peters's empathy for what they see as Minnie's situation also applies to her clothes. The importance they give to Minnie's clothes reveals their own concern for how they dress, for this represents the place they occupy in society. As Glenda Riley observes, "the way women dress reflects what their society thinks about their position and roles in life" (1981: 73), as long as these women submit to the way society wants to dress them. Mrs. Hale, in the quotations above, makes a clear connection among three points: Minnie was different when she was single, she used to dress nicely, and colourfully, and, finally, she draws a relationship between dressing in pretty colours and being lively. It seems that once a woman marries, her taste for fine dresses is killed by wearing the dark clothes a dutiful farmer's wife has to wear, as Mrs. Hale suggests when she blames John for his wife's clothes, not Minnie. It is perhaps significant that Mrs. Hale's regret does not only address Mrs. Wright's clothes, but her own as well. Mrs. Hale, as the farmer's wife she is, also appears on stage in a similar costume to the ones she despises, and probably sometimes she has to dress shabbily. The fact that she claims: "you don't enjoy things when you feel shabby" (40) reinforces the point that she, Mrs. Hale, by using the universal second person singular pronoun, admits that she also feels shabby, and that she is also obliged to wear similar old clothes. Visually, Mrs. Hale's costume marks her as inferior to Mrs. Peters, since her coat is plainly described, without any adjective, unlike Mrs. Peters's "*fur tippet*" (40- 41). This visual difference separates both women regarding their social and economic status in a very realistic way. The Sheriff's wife can afford a "fur tippet", while the farmer's wife can only afford a plain coat. Hence, while Mrs. Hale's and Mrs. Peters's recreation of Minnie's life before our eyes has helped us see Minnie as a geopathic character, they also suggest their own geopathology, and even more in the case of Mrs. Hale, given that her socio-economic status, shown by her clothes, is closer to Minnie's.

In *Trifles* it could be said that the onstage home stands for the metaphorical death-in-life state of Minnie, her liveliness killed off by her husband and the farm, as Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters lead the audience to think. The onstage homes in *Bernice* and *Alison's House*, however, do indeed embody the dead and absent characters who inhabited these places, Bernice and Alison respectively. If in *Trifles* Glaspell uses the presence of Minnie in the farm to hint at the problems Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters could have with their own places, in *Bernice* and *Alison's House*, the onstage characters' victimage of location comes from their confrontation with the presence of the dead absent characters in the rooms they have to inhabit.

When *Bernice* opens the absent protagonist has been dead for a day. Her presence is embodied in the configuration of her onstage room, since the living-room stands exactly as Bernice had it. The first stage direction already establishes the powerful link between the onstage place and the deceased protagonist: "*You feel yourself in the house of a woman you would like to know, a woman of sure and beautiful instincts, who lives simply*" (159). As one critic has said, this first description of the stage space erects Bernice "as a palpable and powerful figure through the setting" (Czerepinski 1995: 146). The onstage characters lead the audience to realise that nothing has been changed in the room. The pillows are on the seats under the window where Bernice usually sat to contemplate the woods, Bernice's high vase is still at the window, her chest, containing her beautiful little cigarette box is on the mantelpiece, and her tea table is exactly where she had it. While Bernice's belongings are visually onstage, Glaspell emphasises the connection between the absent protagonist and these stage properties. At the beginning of the play Father says:

FATHER: Bernice made this house. (*Looking around*) Everything is Bernice. (*A pause*) Change something, Abbie! (*With growing excitement*) Put something in a different place. (*He takes a pillow from the seat under the window, holds it irresolutely a moment, puts it on the floor at the side of the fireplace. On the other side he moves a high vase from the window. Then helplessly*) Well, I don't know. You can't get Bernice out of this room. The tea-table! Come, Abbie, quick! We will take this out of the room. (*Together, Abbie reluctant, they move into the passage-way leading out from the living-room. The Father comes back and sees the chair, now without its table. He goes as if to move it, but cannot do this.*) (160)

This quotation emphasises that Bernice is felt in the room, and that she has a great power over the other characters. Father tries to remove his daughter's presence from the room by changing the spatial configuration of the place. As Waterman says, "she influences the actions of all the characters who gather at her home" (1966: 74). Indeed, the rest of the play spins around the onstage characters' attempt to reconcile themselves with the idea they have of Bernice, a reconciliation carried out to a great extent in spatial terms. Her absence gives way to victimage of location in the present characters, who have to come to terms with the presence of her identity as shown in her home. As Father says above, "You can't get Bernice out of the room", suggesting the difficulties they will have in their enterprise.

Glaspell shows Bernice's presence in her house also through the proxemic description of Craig's first entry onstage. When Craig appears he is afraid of crossing the door, of entering Bernice's house. He "*holds back as if to enter this house is something he can scarcely make himself do; he does not look around the room*" (165). While his sister Laura enters, he "*is still at the door*" (165), and when he finally does he sits on the edge of the chair close to the door (166). He cannot bear Bernice's physical absence, and symbolic presence, and would like to escape. This is symbolised in his sitting close to the door. He is even afraid of looking around, and several times he takes "*a few stumbling steps toward the room where Bernice is*" (169), but he always stops. When he feels brave enough, he "*looks at those various things with which he and Bernice have lived. When he can no longer do this he goes to the passage-way at the front of the staircase*" (174). When he cannot stand the geopathic atmosphere of this room, he gets away. It could be argued that what Craig cannot stand is the idea that his wife, who he never fully possessed, is now gone, so he will never see her perform the role of dutiful wife. Craig, as his sister Laura, cannot comprehend that Bernice stayed alone while he was travelling and sharing his time with other women. Paradoxically, her staying at home made these two other characters see her as an unnatural woman, a wife who did not react against her husband's infidelities. It is only when Craig is told that Bernice has committed suicide that he begins his reconciliation with the place that embodies his wife. This suicide relocates Bernice in the role Craig wanted for her, the wounded wife who, unable to have Craig for herself, put an end to her own life.

Margaret also feels Bernice's presence in the living-room embodied in her belongings. The case of Bernice's little box of cigarettes stands out tellingly. In the following scene Craig and Margaret are together in the living-room, trying to cope with Bernice's death and her metaphysical presence in the room:

CRAIG: It's too much alone. (*He and Margaret stand there hesitatingly, as if they are not able to do it – settle down in this room and talk. Craig takes out his cigarette case. In the subdued voice of one whose feeling is somewhere else.*) You want a cigarette, Margaret?

MARGARET: No. I don't believe so.

CRAIG: Oh, I remember, you don't like these. Bernice must have some of the – (*He opens a chest on the mantel, takes from it a beautiful box*)

MARGARET: (*As she sees the box.*) Oh – (*Turning away.*) Thank you, Craig, but –

CRAIG: Of course. (*Holds the box for a moment, then slowly replaces it.*) (191)

The quotation above is meaningful in two ways as far as geopathology and Bernice's presence are concerned. Glaspell hints at Craig's and Margaret's victimage of location when they are not able to "*settle down in this room*". Glaspell makes them stand hesitatingly for a while as a visual suggestion of these characters' inability to stay in this place. The reason for this inability is revealed when Craig brings Bernice's cigarette box. Margaret's rejection to take one of Bernice's cigarettes and Craig's replacement of the box to the chest on the mantelpiece, indicate their awareness of Bernice's simultaneous presence and absence. These characters will not overcome their victimage of location as long as they cannot stand the representation of Bernice in this place.

The exact location where Bernice's presence is most strongly felt is, of course, the room where her corpse is. Bernice is "In there. Alone. Still" (186). This room, though offstage, has a connection with the onstage space through its door. As J. Ellen Gainor has pointed out, "the door becomes a projection of Bernice in death – an object approached with conflicting emotions, shrunk from yet reached for" (2001: 102). Barbara Ozieblo has also seen in this closed door "an awesome reminder of [Bernice's] demise" (2000: 143). In the same line of thought, it has been said that "[the characters'] focus on the dead woman is theatrically realized by their constant approaches to the closed door behind which her body lies, the door itself acting as this play's concrete symbol of the edge. In fact, these approaches dramatize the continuing development of their relationship to her" (Dymkowski 1988: 96). Glaspell employs this room and this

door to visualise the changing attitudes the other characters display regarding victimage of location. That is, at some points they get over Bernice's death, and are able thus to cope with her metaphysical presence, and at other points, their inability to stand Bernice's death and presence in the house reflects precisely upon this door and room. Throughout the play, when characters talk or think about Bernice, they usually look at the door that separates them from the corpse. Craig makes several failed attempts to enter this room. It is not until the end of Act II that he is strong enough to enter Bernice's room. After Abbie has told him that Bernice had committed suicide, he feels he can enter this location, because he is aware then of "how much" Bernice loved him: "*He goes to the door, bows against it, all sorrow and need*" (203). Glaspell shows Craig's need of his wife through his movements, through his physical touching of the door that leads to her. Craig suffers from a brief collapse, feeling responsible for his wife's death. Glaspell, in keeping with the spatial strategy she has created, shows this by making Craig leave the house, unable to stay in the room that embodies Bernice (218). Dubious again of his own strength to deal with his own responsibility for his wife's suicide, he remains paralysed at the door for a while, until he eventually feels strong enough to see Bernice's corpse. Once more in the play Glaspell makes Craig unable to cope with the presence of his dead wife. After hesitating about leaving the room, he "*looks uncertain at the outer door as if to go outside again*" (220). He goes out again before finally reconciling wholly with this place and with whom it embodies.

Glaspell also uses proxemics to reveal Bernice's father's victimage of location due to the spatial remembrance of his daughter in the house. For Father, the room where Bernice's corpse rests is a constant reminder of the reality he cannot stand. Before there is any verbal indication that Bernice's corpse is in the adjoining room, an analysis of Father's gestures gives us the clue to know it. Very early in the play he "*looks old and broken as he faces the closed door*" (160), and then he complains about having her corpse so close to the living-room: "I wish they'd left Bernice upstairs, Abbie, in her own room. Now there – so near the living-room, right off the living-room" (160). Bernice, now dead, is right off the *living-room*, an ironic remark on the closeness, and at the same time the separation, between life and death. Bernice's presence in this near room is a constant source of sorrow for Father. For instance, before going to bed Father feels the necessity to see Bernice, as if to kiss his little girl goodnight:

FATHER: I was going to bed now. I thought I'd go in here first. (*Slowly goes in where Bernice is.*)

[...] (*The door opens and the Father comes out.*)

FATHER: (*Gently*) Yes. Of course. I'm glad you're here Margaret. But my little girl looks very peaceful, Craig. (*Pause*) She had a happy life. (192- 193)

As long as Bernice is in that room, Father will not start to be able to overcome his loss.

Margaret's relationship with this room is a bit more complex, and Glaspell again works brilliantly on a character's movements to reveal this character's spatial relationship with the house, reflecting also the different conceptions Margaret has of Bernice throughout the play. For Margaret will not stomach easily the idea that Bernice committed suicide. As she arrives to the house, Margaret rushes to this room to see her friend, implying that she is the only character who is brave enough from the very beginning to face Bernice's death. She says to Craig "I came here to see her. Not to sit here talking to you.[...] I want to see Bernice!" The stage direction informs us, "*Crying she goes blindly toward the door, and to Bernice*" (174). The effect of seeing Bernice is so painful, that the house becomes a geopathic location for her, so after seeing her friend, Margaret needs to go out of the house (175).

The reasons behind Margaret's victimage of location regarding Bernice's presence in the house vary throughout the play. At one point she will not stay in the house precisely because she cannot conjoin the identity this house always had, that of the tranquil and happy Bernice, with the idea that Bernice was evil when she made Abbie promise to tell Craig that she had killed herself because of his infidelities. Whereas before Margaret could not be inside the house to avoid the sorrow the memories of her friend brought, now she cannot be in the house because it represents an evil side of her friend she did not know. As she says, "Oh, no – no – no. I can *never* go in there. I – I never *was* – in there" (207, author's emphasis), "I must go away. I can't stay. I can't stay here" (213). An analysis of Margaret's body movements onstage prove that the eagerness Margaret had before to see Bernice turns into an utter rejection of entering the room again. Instead she hides herself in a different room, Father's, where she is found at the beginning of Act III. As she did with Craig, Glaspell shows Margaret's hesitations about what to believe about Bernice in her relation with the door

that separates Bernice from the living-room. At one point Margaret “*puts out her hands, but she does not even touch the door and when she cannot do this she covers her face and, head bent, stands there before the closed door*” (218). As she cannot understand why her friend lied about her death, Margaret cannot even touch the door of the room where she is. Margaret will only be reconciled with the room once she interprets Bernice’s lie in a different way. Towards the end of the play Craig confesses to Margaret that Bernice’s suicide made him realise how much she loved him, and that this has made a new man out of him:

CRAIG: Now – of course it is another world – and Bernice’s world get to me. Don’t you see, Margaret?

MARGARET: Perhaps – I do. (*She looks at the closed door; looks back to him. Waits.*) O-h. (*Waits again, and it grows in her.*) Perhaps I do. (*Turns and very slowly goes to the closed door, opens it, goes in.*) (227)

This is the moment Margaret is reconciled with Bernice. At this point she understands that Bernice’s lie was her means of making Craig feel a better man, giving him power to be a better writer too. Margaret sees then that Bernice’s lie was in the line of all her good acts, and consequently, this marks Margaret’s reconciliation with her friend. Glaspell shows this visually with Margaret’s willingness to enter the room again.

Very briefly, Glaspell complicates the issue of Bernice’s presence, since this is spatially expanded, making it more difficult for characters to escape from her memory and from their victimage of location. Bernice’s presence is not limited to the house and the room where her corpse is, but it is extended to the outside woods that can be seen from the French windows. This is why an analysis of the many entries and exits is interesting. The onstage characters try to avoid Bernice’s embodiment in the house by going out, but Bernice is also on the outside to some extent. Sometimes they do not go offstage to reject Bernice’s onstage presence but to think about Bernice, to think about her in the place they admit she loved the most. Margaret and Craig usually sit under the windows, as they look to the woods and think and talk about Bernice. Bernice loved to tramp the woods in the fall (167), she loved to gather red and yellow branches (228), and her connection to nature is suggested through the nature-related words that are used to describe her: “Why she never destroyed anything – a flower – nor a caterpillar”

(183), and “Why she seemed happy – as trees grow” (183). Craig is aware that the connection between Bernice and the woods is noticeable when he says to Margaret: “You are going to the woods to think of Bernice” (176). Glaspell also emphasises this point in “Faint Trails,” the short story version of the play:

Margaret would look up this path and see Bernice coming through the poplars – her tam over tumbled hair, eyes shining with pleasure in her walk – flushed, smiling, as she came buoyantly, her hands in the pockets of her old green corduroy suit, a bit of deepest orange – muffler, tie, flaming out liked a turned leaf. Then she would sit down on the ground the way a child sits down, take off her tam, do something to her hair, joke and rest. Then, looking far, eyes first wistfully loving this beauty of distant trees – then differently still, as if caught. You knew you did not have her then. Then suddenly she would spring up and dart ahead. Bernice had loved the woods. (2)

As “Bernice loved the woods,” and the other characters can easily see her in the woods, Glaspell shows that for Craig and Margaret there is no physical way out from their victimage of location. Both the house and the surrounding nature carry Bernice’s essence somehow. It will be a metaphysical coming to terms with Bernice’s presence what will allow these characters to recover completely from their victimage of location, as the final chapter of this thesis will analyse in depth.

Glaspell uses a similar dramatic technique for the creation of Alison in *Alison’s House*. As in *Bernice*, the absent protagonist is quite vivid in spatial terms, marking a special relationship between the onstage characters and the rooms that represent her. The first obvious remark that makes one consider the power Alison exerts on this place is that the house, although she had been long dead when the play opens, is still considered hers, as the title of the play announces. Alison is present in the library in Acts I and II through her books and documents; in the stage properties that the other characters are selecting and packing to move. For instance, the way Elsa handles Alison’s books is as tender as the feeling she has for her aunt. When the fire starts, putting the books at risk, Elsa does and says as follows,

*(She looks around the room. Softly.)* Don’t burn. Don’t. *(After another moment, having looked from one thing to another, she goes to the books, runs her hand over them. Stands there. But at the noise of something falling upstairs, she becomes frightened, suddenly takes an armful of books.)* (663)



Elsa sees that Alison lives through her books, and that is the reason why she wants to save them, saving thus Alison's memory and symbolic presence. It is perhaps interesting to note that Glaspell considered books as extensions of one's soul. Martha C. Carpentier and Barbara Ozieblo have pointed out a nice quotation from *The Road to the Temple* where Glaspell talks about books in the following terms:

Two people do not really live together until their books become one library. You have known just how to classify your own – books you have had, some of them since you were eleven years old. Strange now to have them adapting themselves to the books of someone else – these two life-histories becoming one, two pasts uniting. (qtd. in Carpentier and Ozieblo 2006b: 11)

The quotation above includes interesting words that reveal Glaspell's conception of books as bearers of one's taste and past. They are symbols of one's own that melt with another's books and adjust themselves when their lives come together. Glaspell obviously employed this idea to embody Alison in her books. In *Alison's House*, Glaspell uses a reading from one of Alison's book to make an explicit connection between Alison and her posthumous presence in the house. Stanhope reads aloud Emerson's poem "The House":

'There is no architect  
Can build as the muse can;  
She is skilful to select  
Materials for her plan;  
  
Slow and warily to choose  
Rafters of immortal pine,  
(*He glances up to the beamed ceiling above.*)  
Or cedar incorruptible,  
Worthy her design.'  
Some other things, and then – (*Looking ahead.*)  
'She lays her beams in music,  
In music every one,  
To the cadence of the whirling world  
Which dances round the sun.  
That so they shall not be displaced  
By lapses or by wars,  
But for the love of happy souls  
Outlive the newest stars.' (677)

J. Ellen Gainor has noted that Glaspell employs this poem to advance the idea that Alison's poems will outlive the house: "Built on a conceit comparing architecture with poetry, Emerson's verse details how writing, in harmony with nature, will outlast the physical structures man creates. [...] Thus, Alison's house of poetry is greater than, and will remain long after, her actual abode" (2001: 230). Similarly, Kristina Hinz-Bode believes that this poem is quoted here to foreshadow the fact that "Alison has used her poems to communicate her innermost being to the world, and with it an eternal truth about life which will 'outlive the newest stars'" (2006b: 200). I agree with both Gainor and Hinz-Bode that there is a parallelism between Alison's poetry and Emerson's "The House," as her poems, as developed in the final chapter of this thesis, will outlive the house. But I also believe that Glaspell's aim with this long quotation from this poem is to suggest that Alison is the onstage characters' support. Mapping this poem against the idea the onstage characters provide of Alison to the audience, one could say that Alison is like the beams of the house. She is also like the muse that inspires and gives sense to and supports those around her. She, as the beams, was strong enough to reject her lover, to stay in the house, and thus maintain the status of the family. Moreover, as Stanhope, who significantly is the one reading the poem, knows, Alison did that "for the love of the happy souls," that is, so that the rest of the family could be happy, unaware of what she had done for them, faking herself a happy life. Alison, the symbolic beams of the house and the family, hid geopathological woodworms only revealed in her secret poems.<sup>37</sup>

Glaspell articulates the connection between Alison, the house, and her influence on the other characters through Eben's words:

EBEN: The last days we'll ever be in her house – the last day it will be her house – how can we help to think of her – and feel her – and wonder what's the matter with us – that something from her didn't – oh Lord, *make* us something!

ELSA: (*in a low thrilling voice*) Yes, Eben. Yes! (662, author's emphasis)

Alison's presence, according to her nephew and niece, Eben and Elsa, should make them think about their own lives, as they reconstruct Alison's, and it is at this point that they come to assume the geopathology inherent in this place.

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<sup>37</sup> In Chapter 4.2.1.2 I have discussed that these poems reveal "Alison's painful experience of the 'inside'" (156). See pp. 155- 156.

Chapter 4 has analysed Alison's victimage of location. At this stage, however, it is relevant to consider the effect that the discovery of Alison's unhappy life has on the other characters, and, obviously, how this is carried out in spatial terms. It is interesting to note that in *Alison's House* one can find the only instance in Glaspell's plays when a bedroom, a place considered the keeper of one's most hidden secrets, is shown onstage. In the first acts Glaspell feeds our hunger for knowing about Alison's room through the characters' comments, such as, "A great many people have wanted to see it, and haven't", or when after seeing the room Knowles says that, "I will remember it always," "Alison's Stanhope's room – holds something" (657), and also through Agatha's ultimate defence of Alison's room with her own life. In the final act Glaspell presents Alison's room onstage. This room could be considered a kind of sanctuary, for it has been kept exactly as Alison had it, making the characters feel Alison might come in at any moment. In fact, as Ann looks around the room she claims "Alison's room. As if – as if she might be going to bed here" (680), and "Alison, eighteen years dead, is here" (681). As the curtain rises Alison's room is dimly seen. There is "*a fire burning, and the room is lighted by a lamp on the stand near the bed*" (680), providing a mysterious atmosphere, as if this room were indeed inhabited. The clock that "told the hours for Alison" (683) is stopped, a symbol of the paralysis and entrapment after her death, and all the pieces of furniture are described as old: an old bureau, an old walnut table, a single four-post bed with white curtains. There is a picture in a gold, oval frame hanging over the desk. It is Alison's portrait. Importantly, this is the very first time Alison's physical appearance is seen, a luxury Glaspell has never provided to any of her other absent characters, and which contributes to make Alison's presence more vivid. We are called to look at it, as Elsa enters the room and looks at it. This picture "was always there" (681), pointing out again to the fact that nothing has been changed in the room.

Glaspell suggests the onstage characters' uncanny entry into Alison's room through the way she makes them move, what also enhances the absent protagonist's presence in her room. It could be said that the characters' entrance into her room is a mixture of uncertainty about the right they have to enter this room, a slight feeling of fear of being alone in the room and the necessity of being here the last night the house will still be Alison's. Elsa's entrance is described as follows:

*The door opens slowly, and Elsa comes in. She waits a moment by the door, as if to be asked to enter. [...] Goes slowly to the desk. Looks at the picture in a gold, oval frame, which hangs over the desk. She opens the drawer and takes out the portfolio Aunt Agatha gave her. Stands there holding it. She is about to sit at the desk, but steps back from it, as if it is not for her to sit there. Goes to the table. (680)*

Elsa's slow entrance, as if waiting for Alison's invitation, suggests again the presence of her deceased aunt. Elsa moves slowly across the room, and, as Mrs. Hale does in *Trifles*, she feels unable to sit in the chair that stands for the absent character. Moreover, she is relieved when Ann comes, and so invites her to stay: "I'm glad you came" (680). Elsa feels she has to be here, but not alone. About coming to this room, Elsa says, "It wasn't that I wanted to, I had to. [...] I used to come to this room when things were wrong" (680). The way Glaspell makes Stanhope enter the room is quite similar: "*Stanhope opens the door. Stands there a moment before closing it. Continues to stand near the door.*" Finally he "*sits in the chair near the fire; Eben sits at the desk, Elsa at the table. A long pause*" (684). Feeling Alison's presence, Stanhope says. "I wish I could talk with Alison" (683), and the other characters in the room keep silent for a while, thinking about what they would like to say to Alison too.

It is thanks to this configuration of the room that the present characters will come to understand Alison's entrapment; they will understand her victimage of location and will be affected by what Alison had to do for them.<sup>38</sup> The key moment of revelation is when Alison's secret is discovered, when her poems are read, a secret Glaspell grants spatial relevance. In his *Poétique de l'espace* Gaston Bachelard dedicates a whole chapter to what he considers "images of the secret," namely, chests, caskets, closets, keyholes and drawers.<sup>39</sup> For Bachelard, "In the chest there are *unforgettable* things, unforgettable for us, and also for those to whom we pass our treasure. Past, present and future are condensed there. Therefore, the chest is the memory of the immemorial" (1965: 125, author's emphasis, my translation).<sup>40</sup> Alison's unpublished poems constitute

<sup>38</sup> In Chapter 4.2.1.2 I have argued how in this room Stanhope, Eben and Elsa revive memories of Alison that also lead to see her as an imprisoned, and geopathic, character. See pp. 154- 156.

<sup>39</sup> See Bachelard 1965: 117.

<sup>40</sup> "En el cofrecillo se encuentran cosas *inolvidables*, inolvidables para nosotros, y también para aquellos a quienes legaremos nuestro tesoro. El pasado, el presente y el porvenir se hallan condensados allí. Y así, el cofrecillo es la memoria de lo inmemorial" (Bachelard 1965: 125, author's emphasis).

an image of secrecy too, and when the portfolio is opened something similar to what happens to the chest, according to Bachelard, takes place. These poems reveal her past, while they link this past to the present of the onstage characters as well as to their future, as will be seen later. The geography related to these poems enhances their secrecy. As in a set of Matryoshka dolls, the first time the poems were seen they were inside a portfolio in Agatha's bag. And now that the characters are in Alison's room, her poems are inside one of the drawers of Alison's desk. When all these metaphorical doors are opened, Agatha's bag, and later the drawer and the portfolio, what Bachelard might call "the dimension of intimacy" opens (1965: 126, my translation),<sup>41</sup> and what is inside gains full relevance. Alison's poems function as the "secret" in realistic drama; they are what the room "holds," what characters entering the room felt about the room. What the poems tell promises a change in the dramatic development of the play.

Glaspell embodies Alison in her poems, hence the utter protection the other characters display when dealing with them. The way Agatha has protected the bag containing Alison's poems reflects her wish to protect her sister, as well as the family and their place in society. Agatha keeps the poems in "*a silk bag, closed by a draw-string*" (678), a bag she physically holds, made out of silk, a soft material that might symbolise Agatha's love for Alison. However, Agatha's geopathology also reflects on what she does with the poems that incarnate Alison: "*With trembling fingers Agatha undoes the string of her bag and takes out a small portfolio. Looks fearfully about, looks at the fire. She tries to rise*" (679). What follows is Agatha's pathological hesitation about whether burning the poems, ending with the secret that has imprisoned her inside the house, or giving them to Elsa:

AGATHA: Then – (*She holds out the leather case, but withdraws it. Then suddenly gives it.*) Take it! For – Elsa. (*She falls forward.*)

ELSA: (*frightened.*) Aunt Agatha! (*She leans back in the chair, though not letting go the small portfolio Agatha has given her. Becomes more frightened as she looks.*) Aunt Agatha! What is this? Speak to me! (*After another moment of growing fear she runs to the door.*) Father! Eben! (679)

Elsa possesses now Alison's embodiment in the poems, and as Agatha did before, she presses them "*against her breast*" (679), a symbolic embrace of love with Alison. Elsa

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<sup>41</sup> "La dimensión de la intimidad" (Bachelard 1965: 126).

does not even release the poems to help Stanhope and Eben to reanimate Agatha. Elsa has become the guardian of Alison's secret, though she still does not know what the portfolio contains.

Alison's presence in her room becomes more evident when her family gathers to read her poems. Glaspell describes this process as an almost ritualistic one. Glaspell locates Elsa at the table, apart from the rest of characters, who sit in chairs apart, and she occupies the front space of the stage, spatially granting an enormous importance to the revelation that is going to take place. Then, "*She unfastens one side, takes out a slender package of old papers, tied with a thread.*" As Glaspell says, Elsa "*feels*" Alison's paper (686). Glaspell increases the tension as Elsa "*tries to untie the knot*" and "*has trouble with it*". Stanhope tells her to "Break that thread!", and "*Elsa does so, and unfolds a long sheet of old paper.*" They discover that it is "Alison's writing!" (686). Elsa gives different packages of Alison's poems to Eben and Stanhope, so that they all share this moment of recognition, of meeting the real Alison, "Alison at her best" (686). After they have silently read the poems, they struggle over what to do with them.<sup>42</sup> Glaspell dramatises her characters' renegotiation with Alison's identity and her presence in the house and in her poems, in the different positions they will hold regarding what to do with the poems. Ted, the young character eager to know more secrets about Alison, secrets that will pave the way for his college studies, "*with a swift movement he puts some of the papers in his pocket, reaches for others.*" Stanhope, representative of the older generation, and who indeed told Alison to stay at home, prefers keeping the poems in the house. Glaspell shows this by making Stanhope spring at Ted, menacing "Drop them! Drop them or I'll kill you!" (688). Then "*Ted snatches for more of them.*" Eben, who also wants to protect Alison, "*seizes him.*" Ted "*tries to break from Eben's grip. Elsa comes behind them, one hand on Eben's shoulder, the other on Ted's*" (689).

The physical and dialectic confrontations among these characters stand for the different perspectives they want to remember Alison from. For instance, Elsa, considering the poems she has just read, concludes that Alison would be "Glad I have my love. In spite of – all the rest. Knowing what it is to be alone, I think she would be

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<sup>42</sup> Chapter 5 has pointed out that Glaspell employs the poems, and what to do with them, to enact the generational conflict in *Alison's House*. See pp. 235- 236.

glad I am not alone” (689). Elsa agrees with this new identity of Alison as a repressed woman who would be glad her niece did not stay trapped inside the walls of the house and its respectability. Stanhope, on the contrary, still prefers to place first Alison’s effort and submission to the rules as her most important feature, he praises “the name Alison held high” whatever the cost (690). For him, it is more important to “think of others,” of family and “our little town” (691). Independently of their position, the truth is that these characters have just discovered that Alison was forced to stay and that her life, contrary to what they thought, was unhappy. They have thus to reconsider the identity they had created for her and which is present in the house, what also has consequences for their own identities. Alison’s poems and the feeling of entrapment they denote make the other characters think about their own identity and problem with the place they have in society. Knowles quotes at the end again a fragment from Emerson’s poem, now uttered emphasising that the words “*have a great mission*” (690). The mission is that the onstage characters have to adjust themselves to what Alison really constituted. They cannot keep her as the “beams”, the support of the family; because they are now aware she was not what they thought she was. The final chapter will consider these characters’ departure from their geopathic location and the way they will help Alison to escape posthumously her own entrapment in the house and given roles, what is their “great mission.”

To sum up, this section has argued Glaspell’s command over the absent character and its relationship with geopathology. The presence of Minnie, Bernice and Alison in the places they inhabited is strongly felt by other characters, through the way these present characters make the audience picture the absent ones, and through the relations Glaspell establishes between her characters and pieces of furniture and stage properties. Moreover, as this section has pointed out, the presence of Minnie, Bernice and Alison provoke in the rest of the characters feelings of ill-placement. Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters identify themselves with the geopathic features they apply to Minnie through the elements of the stage space. Their conclusion that Minnie was dead-in-life, isolated, and entrapped on the farm can be considered as much a self-reflection about themselves as what really could have happened to Minnie. In *Alison’s House* Stanhope, Eben and Elsa renegotiate the identity they had of the absent Alison. As her presence is more and more accurately felt in the house, above all with the discovery of her secret poems, the present characters see her as the imprisoned woman she was, an

imprisonment she was forced to accept in order not to disgrace her family. Glaspell also develops victimage of location through the spatial presence of absent characters as the onstage characters project on space the feelings they have towards the absent characters, as Margaret and Craig in *Bernice*, or because they miss very much the absent character, as Father in *Bernice* and Elsa, Eben, Stanhope and Agatha in *Alison's House*.

In conclusion, this chapter has argued that Glaspell consistently works on images of death in her plays. From the perspective of the present study on the representation of geopathology in her dramatic work, it seems that there is a close relationship between images of death and the representation of "place as a problem." The first section of this chapter has focused on how Glaspell describes houses as graves, determining the geopathic life-in-death state of the characters she places in those settings. The configuration of the stage space as burial ground especially for children has been analysed in the second section of this chapter. The uses that Glaspell suggests for a study of geopathology in her plays regarding the buried child image are important tools to detect her revision of mythical representations of families and homes as safe havens. The third section of this chapter has brought to the surface that the way Glaspell uses images of war in her plays reveals that wars are struggles for space that have determined her characters' geopathic identity in different ways; by giving them a place in society, by providing them with a physical place to live, or by paralysing them as they face a world that is destroying itself. The fourth and final section of this chapter has contributed to the analysis of the role Glaspell gives to death, literal or metaphorical, regarding her absent protagonists and the spatial presence they have in the plays in which they appear. Glaspell employs their spatial presence to suggest the onstage characters' victimage of location, since they have to cope with the identity the absent characters impregnated in their dwellings or to negotiate new identities they find in these places. After having analysed the different dramatic means Glaspell employs to present place as a problem, the final chapter of this thesis discusses Glaspell's dramatic principles of departure, the solutions; if possible, she provides her geopathic characters to escape from their locations.



**CHAPTER 7**

**DRAMATIC PRINCIPLES  
OF DEPARTURE**

## CHAPTER 7

### DRAMATIC PRINCIPLES OF DEPARTURE

Chaudhuri points out that some characters in modern drama find in departure the principle to escape from their victimage of location. She defines this departure as an “overriding mission and desire” which, whether successful or not, triggers the development of plot in many of the plays she analyses (2000:56). Nevertheless, as Chaudhuri also points out, home-leaving as a means of getting away is not an easy and common resolution in realistic drama, but “an impossible ideal, not a practicable plot convention” (2000: 62), since in general terms one of the cornerstones of Realism is to maintain the given order. Ibsen’s Nora is the supreme example of this kind of character, which against all expectations in realistic conventions, puts an end to geopathology by stepping outside of the place that encapsulated her problems, as she makes her unlikely resolution of disobeying the given order. Moreover, Nora’s departure, far from being a quiet and secretive one, is performed with the most infamous slamming of doors ever heard or seen in a play before. Nora’s act, however, would “not become the norm of realism” (2000: 62). In Glaspell’s theatre some characters abandon the stage, escaping thus their victimage of location *à la Nora*.

This dramatic solution is possible because Glaspell’s plays, as argued throughout this thesis, are not purely realistic. The mixture of Realism with modernisms is what allows Glaspell to make her characters deviate from the constraining social orders that in purely realistic drama would confer an inescapable spatial determinism on her characters. But what appears as a more interesting case to argue is whether in Glaspell’s theatre there are other dramatic solutions, other principles of departure, different from actually leaving the stage space that suffocates the geopathic character. This chapter analyses first, those cases in which Glaspell employs what Chaudhuri labels “Heroism of departure,” understood as a physical abandonment of the stage space on the part of the geopathic character. Other foci of this section will be those other principles of departure which do not imply the geopathic character’s physical departure from the stage, and which consistently appear in Glaspell dramatic works and which would open up the path for future considerations on the matter of geopathic drama. For this purpose, the power Glaspell grants to symbols will be determining to find out other principles to escape from “ill-placement.”

Firstly, some considerations must be made on the appropriateness of Chaudhuri's term "Heroism of departure." For the present study, heroism of departure is not to be understood merely in terms of a physical movement from one place to another, but also in terms of a change in identity, when characters depart from an identity imposed on them and choose freely what they want to be or to do. In many cases this change in identity reflects upon the physical space, as this section analyses in a detailed way. Nevertheless, it seems that the term "heroism" is not always the most appropriate word to apply to the various ways characters escape. The term heroism is generally used to express someone's brave and courageous acts. But as this section will show, very often the characters that "depart" can hardly be called heroes or heroines in the traditional sense. Many of Glaspell's characters employ what Jane Wolf, referring to literature, calls "guerrilla tactics." With these "guerrilla tactics" Wolf refers to women writers who use little strategies of resistance to subvert the established power, i. e. patriarchy, which subjects them (1990: 82). Therefore, though "guerrilla tactics" might not be regarded as fair game, they cover a practical goal. These tactics are not signs of heroism, but they enable characters to come to terms with the places they inhabit, escaping thus their geopathology.

Judith Butler has pointed out that "The possibilities of gender transformation are to be found precisely in the arbitrary relation between such [performative] acts, in the possibility of a failure to repeat, a de-formity, or a parodic repetition that exposes the phantasmatic effect of abiding identity as a politically tenuous construction" (1999: 179). That is, there might be a moment when the subject fails to repeat the same act in the same place, the act that gave the subject a gender identity. This is what some of Glaspell's female characters do to escape from given roles. It is significant that Butler stresses on this point,

If subversion is possible, it will be a subversion from within the terms of the law, through the possibilities that emerge when the law turns against itself and spawns unexpected permutations of itself. The culturally constructed body will then be liberated, neither to its 'natural' past, nor to its original pleasures, but to an open future of cultural possibilities. (1999: 119)

According to Butler, gender transformations can only occur within the limits of law. This is true in most of the cases in Glaspell's plays. Her female characters' guerrilla

tactics account for it. Nevertheless, in some cases Glaspellian characters perform acts to liberate themselves that go straight against the law and the integrity of other characters, such as murder. These cases cannot be called heroic acts, either. Consequently, this study prefers to use the label “Principles of departure” to cover the spectrum of heroism of departure as well as other principles that allow characters to get away from the suffocating places they are trapped in.

### 7.1 Physical Departure from Fictional Locations

To begin with, this section presents an analysis of those plays in which characters follow the pattern provided by Chaudhuri: characters that do leave the stage space in their attempt to beat their victimage of location. Elsa in *Alison's House* seems to be the only one to follow this path, leaving the house that trapped her to live her life with her lover. If scholars have long wondered what would happen to Ibsen's Nora once she slams the door, Glaspell makes her Elsa return home to talk about the aftermath of her courageous resolution. In Chapter 3.3 I have discussed Glaspell's representation of a failed homecoming through Elsa's displacement and abjection.<sup>1</sup> But also considering Elsa's offstage life, it seems that although Elsa won over her victimage of location, she has not managed to be happy far from “home,” which complicates the question of her “heroic” act:

ANN: I always had – sounds foolish – a sort of case on you. All younger girls did. Elsa Stanhope – they'd say. As if you were what they wanted to be. [...] We thought you were brave.

ELSA: I wasn't brave. I was trapped. I didn't think it was right – but I couldn't help myself. And Bill. When you love, you want to give your man – everything in the world. [...] Our love is a flame – burning fiercely – in sorrow. (682)

While according to Ann, all the younger girls find in Elsa an example to follow; she is the girl who “was trapped” and bravely went away, Elsa's reply suggests that maybe her departure was not completely worth it. Bill and she have to live a life of isolation, separated from their families and the places they loved. “He misses the business, and his friends, and his children. I can see him missing them,” says Elsa (678). Their sorrow is their payback for taking the courageous decision of departing from trapping places.

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 107.

It is interesting to note that Susan Glaspell had already worked on a similar plot in her 1915 novel *Fidelity*. In this novel, Ruth, the protagonist, falls in love with Stuart Williams, a married man, and they elope. But at the time when Ruth comes back to her Midwestern hometown, she acknowledges that isolation has made their love diminish: “She [Ruth] had been too long by herself. She needed to be one with others. Life, for a time, had a certain terrible beauty that burned in that sense of isolation. But it was not the way. One needed to be with others” (1915: 174). Through Ruth, Glaspell articulates what Elsa in *Alison’s House* summarises in her word “sorrow”:

And then she came back West, to Stuart, and somehow the radiance went, courage ebbed, it came to seem that life was all fixed, almost as if life, in the real sense, was over. That sense of having failed, having been inadequate to her own feeling, struck her down to a wretched powerlessness. And so routine, hard work, bitter cold, loneliness, that sense of the cruelty of life which the sternness of the country gave – those things had been able to take her; it was because something had gone dead in her. (1915: 336- 337)

While Ruth beats the victimage of location of her Midwestern hometown to the promise of a life full of love with Stuart, her new home in the Colorado becomes another geopathic space, as Elsa’s words above also imply. Interestingly, Ruth goes a step further: she abandons Stuart and moves to New York:

I’ve shut in my own experience. If I stayed on here I’d be shut in with my own dead experiences. I want to go on! I can’t stop here- that’s all. And we have to find our own way of going on [...] I’m going to *live* again, Ted – not just go on with what living has left [...] It isn’t unfaithful to turn from a person you have nothing more to offer, for whom you no longer make life a living thing. It’s more faithful to go. (1915: 354- 355, author’s emphasis)

It has been suggested that Glaspell modelled Ruth on herself, since she too fell in love with George Cram Cook when he was a married man, and they also had to leave their hometown, Davenport, to be together. It could be pointed out, therefore, that with Ruth’s story Glaspell could be reflecting upon her own decision to leave her town and family in order to live with Cook, a man who loved being out and drinking, leaving Susan alone many times. Martha C. Carpentier says,

*Fidelity* is the story of a young woman’s struggle to free herself from the cultural binarisms that entrap her within her gender and to break through to her unique individuality. But Glaspell

shows at the same time how hollow the American romantic ideal of self-definition at the expense of community is for women, because a woman cannot do that alone, without the friendship and support of other women. *Fidelity* is a young woman's novel – a cry of rebellion against the oppressive patriarchal forces of the late Victorian society in which Glaspell grew up and a cry of triumph at her liberation from that society, with the world all before her, waiting to be discovered. (2001: 24- 25)

Glaspell re-writes this plot in *Alison's House*. But in this case, and probably affected by Cook's death, Elsa's discourse on the outcome of her heroic departure is not straightforward. Barbara Ozieblo has pointed out that in *Alison's House*, as in many others of her works, "Glaspell struggled to justify her love life" (2000: 238). Nevertheless, and although Glaspell's covert justification of her own departure is obvious, Elsa's short comment to Ann also makes spectators wonder about Elsa's happiness and the value of her departure from home. As Elsa says, she is "Happy, and unhappy" (678), the high price for her heroism of departure, being with the man one loves but far away from family and friends.

Other characters in Glaspell's plays that abandon their homes to overcome their sense of ill-placement are Minnie in *Trifles* and Madeline in *Inheritors*, and as it happens with Elsa in *Alison's House*, the aftermaths of their departures are also problematic. Both leave their houses to go to prison, so they move from one trapping space to another. But, on the whole, Minnie has got rid of a place that oppressed her, according to Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters. With an apparently paradoxical epigram, "I'd rather be a locked up American than a free American" (145), Madeline asserts that she prefers being in prison, but defending the principles she believes in, than staying in the prison of her house and society and accepting the rules she cannot live under, Madeline "decides that she prefers being a free spirit in prison than being fettered to hypocrisy the rest of her life" (Rathburn 1921: np). However, as will be seen later, Minnie's and Madeline's departures from their homes open up a different field of heroism in more symbolic terms.

Chaudhuri has pinpointed that some characters in modern drama see "death as liberation" (2000: 250), thus death can be used as a principle of departure. For instance, Agatha in *Alison's House* could be seen as a character responding to this pattern. She escapes her victimage of location the moment she passes away. In this concern,

Katherine Rodier refers to Agatha as a heroine: “the poet’s sister becomes a heroine for her dying act of committing Alison’s remaining poems to Elsa” (1995: 205). Nevertheless, a close look to the dramatisation of Agatha’s death does not cast her as a heroine, but as a character who, overcome by the burden of what this place represents, cannot do but die:

AGATHA: How could I tell what – what she wanted me to do? (*Pause.*) Who is looking at us?

ELSA: No one is looking at us. You and I are here alone.

AGATHA: You are Elsa?

ELSA: I am Elsa.

*(With trembling fingers AGATHA undoes the string of her bag and takes out a small port-folio. Looks fearfully around, looks at the fire. She tries to rise.)*

ELSA: What is it, Aunt Agatha? I will do anything you want done.

AGATHA: You will – do anything – I want done?

ELSA: Why, yes, Aunt Agatha. I will do anything in the world for you.

AGATHA: Elsa will do it. Elsa.

ELSA: Yes. Elsa will do it.

AGATHA: Then – *(She holds out the leather case, but withdraws it. Then suddenly gives it.)*  
Take it! For – Elsa. *(She falls forward.)* (679)

Glaspell shows that Agatha is not fully conscious of what she is doing through her disorientation and her contradictory statements. Agatha does not know whether she is alone or whom she is talking to. Moreover, as seen in Chapter 6, she is wavering between burning the papers and entrusting them to someone who will burn them. In this manner, Agatha cannot be seen as a heroine, because she does not have in mind the “heroic” act of making Alison’s poems be published. On the contrary, she wants them destroyed once for all. She is passing her own burden to her niece, in the same manner that she had made Jennie, the maid; promise her, that, in case she died before the papers were burnt, she would do it herself. In Agatha’s final phrase, “For – Elsa,” another complication on the matter of her heroism arises. Hinz-Bode asserts that, “Agatha might have changed her mind in that one hesitant moment before she finally gives the package to her niece. Her final words – ‘For Elsa’ might indicate that Agatha finally did decide that Alison’s poems should be passed on through female lineage so that they will be preserved” (2006b: 199). This phrase is later repeated by Eben and Stanhope, who agree that Alison wrote “For – Elsa.” It might also be possible that what Agatha is doing here is repeating Alison’s final wish that her poems be passed on to Elsa, as it finally

happens at the end of the play. Indeed, in this scene Agatha calls Elsa “Little Elsa,” the name Alison called her niece by, as Elsa recalls (663). In her confusion, Agatha would be doing what Alison always wanted her to do, but never what Agatha herself, fully conscious, would do. Therefore, since Agatha seems unconscious of what she is doing and that her permanent goal throughout the play has been to burn the poems, she can hardly be called a heroine. It seems clearer that she is the more constant and suffering victim, bearing the secret of the house, because it was only Agatha who knew about the existence of Alison’s concealed poems.

Bernice’s case of physical departure through death is very interesting too. Though her death has been a natural one, the outcome she gets of her demise turns her into a heroine somehow. Most critics have seen in Bernice’s command to Abbie to make Craig believe she has committed suicide a proof of her superiority and immense love. She knew how to make her unfaithful husband happy, turning him into a good writer:

Bernice is a woman who is aware of the social and psychological role that her husband requires her to act out and of the effect of that role for their relationship. She is conscious of Craig’s need to possess her as a woman, to seek his image in the reflection of her devotion, and she is conscious of the strength that he derives from this illusion. (Friedman 1995: 157)

Likewise, Cheryl Black believes that “Bernice’s bizarre, post-mortem sacrifice seems a compensatory gesture, a sign that she had little to give him in life” (2005: 56). While in life Bernice was never the wife Craig desired, some critics see that her faked suicide is a compensation for her deviation from the ideal wife role she had never performed. Nonetheless, I share the standpoint of other scholars whose interpretation of Bernice’s faked suicide sets her apart from her reinscription within the role her husband wanted for her. Veronica Makowsky has pointed out a further implication in Bernice’s death and wish, that “Through the ‘fiction’ of her suicide, Bernice is actually telling the truth: her life has killed her” (1999: 60). As suggested previously, Bernice’s life was not a happy one. She was a victim of place, already dead when her physical death occurred.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The reflection of Bernice’s unhappy life upon the physical onstage place as well as through what characters say about her has been discussed in Chapter 4. 1, pp. 134- 135.



In keeping with Makowsky's disbelief in Bernice's happy life, Glaspellian scholar Sharon Friedman has recently opened a new means of interpretation for Bernice's death, one that could help to finally understand Bernice's geopathology. Friedman has called our attention to the relationship between *Woman's Honor* and *Bernice*.<sup>3</sup> In *Woman's Honor* the Scornful One claims, "A life that somebody has died for is practically a ruined life. For how are you going to think of it as anything but – a life that somebody has died for?" (134). In this manner, one could wonder whether Bernice is really doing Craig a favour or just taking revenge. While all the characters have endeavoured to present Bernice as a happy woman, the truth is that she lived a life of isolation, sharing her days with her paralysed father, and walking in the trapping woods that make the house difficult to access. It must not be forgotten that after all Glaspell constructs in Bernice a female character whose main feature was the "stillness" the place she inhabited had transferred to her.

Bernice's final wish is her principle of departure. Glaspell suggests Bernice's real intention with the lie about her death, and this seems to be that she is not trying to make Craig happy but to make him pay for the miserable life she had to live. Abbie talks about how Bernice asked her to lie: "'Oh, Abbie, do this last thing for me! After all there has been, I have a *right* to do it. If my life is going – let me have *this* much from it!'" (206, author's emphasis). Glaspell makes Bernice say that she has the "*right*," so this is not a duty, the duty of the perfect wife that Bernice did not carry out in life. On the contrary, Bernice feels she has the right to avenge herself, "After all there has been," after all her sorrow, stillness, and entrapment. As Makowsky points out, Glaspell might be suggesting that "Bernice, like the women in *Trifles*, is perpetually stymied in achieving cosy domesticity through the poor material provided by a patriarchal society: her baby dies, her father withdraws from life and authority, her husband philanders and writes trash" (1999: 60). Thus, Bernice had many factors to become a victim of place and to find relief in her death.

As Ben-Zvi has said, *Bernice* is, "seemingly, a play about self-sacrifice" (2006: 285), but in fact, it is a play about Bernice's self-revenge for the victimage of location she suffered from. While it seems Craig is stupid enough to see in his wife's suicide a

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<sup>3</sup> Private conversation with the author, Lawrence, Kansas, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2005.

proof of love, the spectator cannot but share Margaret's first impression, namely, that Bernice goes too far with her lie. Margaret abandons her idea when she sees Craig's utterly happy as he thinks he finally had Bernice. That is, Margaret "is ready to interpret Bernice's last act as a 'gift to the spirit' because this notion restores to her the very principles her own life is built upon" (Hinz-Bode 2006b: 120) and the ideas Margaret had of her friend's identity. But when we map what Bernice does against the Scornful One's comment above, as Sharon Friedman proposes, we realise that Bernice could be here ruining Craig's life for ever, gaining command over him for life, ruling over him after death, a definition of her identity completely opposed to that Margaret holds. I agree with Barbara Ozieblo's observation that, the absent protagonist "escapes society by literally moving into another life: she dies, and in death wields absolute power over her husband" (1990: 72). Similarly, Jackie Czerepinski affirms that her death "gives Bernice a power she did not have in life" (1995: 149). From now onwards Craig's life is "a life that somebody has died for." And even more, with her faked suicide Bernice's power extends to other characters in the play too. As Brenda Murphy observes, Bernice even controls her beloved friend Margaret: "Margaret, who values truth, must collaborate in the lie that Bernice leaves about her life" (2005: 193), and so does Abbie.

It could be said that with Bernice's demise Glaspell fulfils George Lukács's idea of heroism through death in modern drama. According to Lukács, "The heroes of the new drama always partake of the ecstatic, they seem to have become conscious of a sense that death can vouchsafe them the transcendence, greatness, and illumination which life withheld, [...] and together with this a sense that death will fulfil and perfect their personalities" (1992: 438). Thus, it is interesting to argue that Bernice consciously worked on her death as she saw it approaching, and prepared it in such a way, that she would get transcendence and greatness once she had died, illuminating and controlling her husband's life. On this issue, Dickey and Gainor have reflected upon the way Bernice manages to leave two different images of herself after her death: "One, the quiet, but almost melodramatic image of the stereotypically wronged wife, the other, that of an independent, generous woman who perceives and fulfills others' most fundamental needs and desires" (2005: 39). That is, Bernice manages to create and maintain two very different, and even opposite, versions of herself, leaving all who knew her satisfied with their memories of her. As Christine Dymkowsky has affirmed, "By using her death to convince Craig that he had the power over her he yearned for,

Bernice, from her remote position, exercises a liberating power of her own” (1988: 97). Bernice *liberates* herself, getting loose from her victimage of location by making use of her death to exert her power over the other characters.

## 7.2 Making Others Depart

It has been discussed how Glaspell complicates the issue of physical departure as a solution to victimage of location, and that only a few characters in her work voluntarily leave their locations. This discussion turns now to another dramatic device that can be found in Glaspell’s plays as a solution to geopathology, a device also related to physical departure. Some characters overcome their victimage of location by making other characters depart, by literally expelling from the stage space those other characters that have contributed to some extent to the creation of a geopathic atmosphere. Seymore in *Chains of Dew* is representative of this principle. When Seymore cannot stand what is happening in his house, and with the phoney excuse that he does everything for Dotty and his Mother, he asks his New York friends: “I’m sorry to have to ask you – not to prolong this visit” (III, 35). He expels Nora, Leon and O’Brien from his house in order to gain control over it again. And this is Eleanor’s unfulfilled wish in *The Comic Artist*,<sup>4</sup> that Luella and Nina leave her house. *The Comic Artist* has two different endings, and none of them provides Eleanor with a principle of departure. In the published version, Nina threatens to kill herself when Stephen and her are discovered embracing; and Karl drowns as he thinks he is rescuing his wife. In the Broadway production’s ending, “changed at the request of the director,” Karl and Nina decide to start all over again and leave. But in any case, after all that has happened on the stage, “Stephen and Eleanor are left with the wreckage of their [marriage]” and their home (Gainor 2001: 200).

The most extreme example that can be found in Glaspell’s plays regarding a character’s expulsion as a solution to geopathology is murder. The trope of “death as liberation” Chaudhuri pointed to is here enlarged to refer to other cases where other characters’ demise helps the protagonists to break away from ill-placement. In *Trifles* Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters see in Minnie’s alleged murder of her husband her means of releasing herself from the suffocating farm. After *Trifles*, in *The Verge* Glaspell comes

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<sup>4</sup> In Chapter 4.2.2, pp. 163- 164, I discuss the reason why Eleanor’s house will never be her shelter again.

back to murder as a means of escaping from ill-placement. Claire's murder of Tom is maybe one of the most polemic issues in the play, as can be observed in the amount of criticism and different interpretations that Claire's final act has given way to. As Dickey and Gainor have pointed out, *The Verge* has an "enigmatic conclusion" (2005: 42). It is surprising that while Tom has been Claire's ally throughout the play, she kills him close to the end. Some critics have pointed out that Tom is in many ways parallel to Claire. Both are located in a marginal position, "isolate[d] from the conventions of a society in which both feel alien" (Ben-Zvi 1986: 26). Glaspell suggests Tom's marginality through Tom's constant "physical escapes, forays to India" (1986: 26). Nevertheless, close to the end of the play Claire murders him:

*her arms go around his neck [...] he would loosen her hands, for he cannot breathe. But when she knows that she is choking him, that knowledge is fire burning its way into the last passion [...] still not wanting to hurt her, he is slow in getting free. He keeps stepping backward trying, in growing earnest, to loosen her hands. But he does not loosen them before she has found the place in his throat that cuts off breath. [...] She has pushed him against one of the plants at right as he sways, strength she never had before pushes him over backward, just as they have struggled from sight. Violent crash of glass is heard [...] there is no sound. CLAIRE raises – steps back – is seen now; is looking down. (99)*

The way Glaspell makes the crime take place is in itself what has provoked such a different strain of criticism regarding Claire's violent act. As seen above, the way Glaspell imagines Tom's death is a strange mixture of love and murder. The scene begins as if Claire were embracing Tom or about to kiss him, only to suffocate him in the end. Though in *The Verge* the murder is partially performed onstage, unlike in *Trifles*, the reasons are not clear. Most critics have tended to equate Claire's murder with madness. David Sievers has indeed seen in Claire "a terrifying real portrait of maniac-depressive psychosis" (1955: 70), a character that "has completely lost touch with reality" and passes "the verge of insanity" (1955: 71). In keeping with Sievers's point, Nelligan affirms that Claire kills Tom because he wanted "to 'save' her from madness" (1995: 91- 92). And many are the scholars agreeing that Claire's violent

outburst symbolises the idea that Claire can only achieve freedom in terms of “madness.”<sup>5</sup>

I disagree with these interpretations on the basis of what Glaspell argues about female madness in other of her works. In her novel *The Visioning* (1911) Glaspell had already called our attention to the term “madness” as a mere label that prevents digging into people’s situations and feelings. In this novel Glaspell seems to denounce the fact that by finding a label for disturbing behaviour, the solution to such behaviour can be left unconsidered and those around the “mad” one are liberated from offering help. In *The Visioning*, a working girl commits suicide. The reasons behind it are simplified by a character with the statements that ““She was tired of things”” (1911: 202), and that she was ““a neurotic””(1911: 213). But Katie, the heroine of the novel wonders: ““I think it’s such a fine thing we got hold of that word. Since we’ve known about neurotics we can just throw all the emotion and suffering and tragedy of the world in the one heap and leave it to the scientists. It lets *us* out so beautifully, doesn’t it?”” (1911: 213, author’s emphasis). Furthermore, in Glaspell’s working “Notes on *The Verge*,” she describes the plot of this play and her protagonist in the following terms,

“The story of a woman’s adventure out of forms moulded for us. In her experiment with plants she sees that they sometimes break themselves up, because something in them knows they can’t go farther. Two acts of the play are in the greenhouse where she comes to see that these explosions may be expulsion of birth. She sees life with a clarity which leaves no satisfaction in which to rest. Like her plants she is on the verge –perhaps insane – perhaps saner than we dare to be.” (qtd. in Ben-Zvi 2005: 239)

Glaspell does not only suggest that Claire may be sane, but even “saner” than any other character in the play.

Though they do not make the connection between *The Verge* and Glaspell’s rumination on using terms such as “madness,” “hysteria,” or “neurosis” in *The Visioning* or her very notes on *The Verge*, Bottoms and Galbus have approached the end of this play a bit differently from those explained above. They do not come to interpret

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<sup>5</sup> See for instance Bach 1995: 254, Dymkowski 1988: 101, Fernández-Morales 2002: 174, Friedman 1984: 72- 76, Gainor 1989: 96, Hinz-Bode 2006b: 162, McBride 2006: 166, Makowsky 1993: 82, 146, Nester 1997: 3, Ozieblo 1994a: 225- 226, Schwank 1989: 421, Shaffer 1997: 51- 52, Sichert 1997: 295, and Waterman 1966: 81- 82, 1979: 22.

the end as “reactive or destructive” (Bottoms 1998: 143), making explicit the point that the end is open for interpretation, and thus, Claire’s madness must not be taken for granted<sup>6</sup>. According to Bottoms and Galbus the fact that Claire strangles Tom as a reflection of her struggle against subordination to patriarchal rules is not a unique interpretation. Smith has taken this point even further, suggesting that Claire kills Tom simply because she cannot emasculate him.<sup>7</sup> Though I do not agree with Smith on the whole, since Claire’s interests go beyond controlling Tom, I find this idea interesting for opening a new way of seeing this play far away from realistic interpretations. This point would be directly linked to Elin Diamond’s<sup>8</sup> and Steve Frank’s standpoint that the end of this play is not to be read in realistic terms: “To read *The Verge* solely as a documentation of Claire’s descent into insanity is ultimately to read the play through the confining lens of realistic narrative and characterology by which specific past experiences and inherited traits lead to conflict and tragedy” (Frank 2003: 125). A reading of Claire’s murder separated from a realistic optics would reveal that she commits this crime to avoid being trapped in forms moulded for her.<sup>9</sup> To label her “mad” would mean to spoil Claire’s experiment in the very end. To call her mad would imply repeating the key word all the characters surrounding her and, whom she despises, have in mind, to support the belief that neurologist Dr. Emmons could cure her.

Tom’s murder is totally necessary for a coherent ending of *The Verge*. I agree with Brenda Murphy’s statement that, “From a Nietzschean perspective, the killing of Tom is the act that takes Claire the creator beyond good and evil” (2005: 201). Tom’s murder does not signify Claire’s failure, because through her murder Claire achieves her goal: becoming a goddess, a superwoman. Throughout the play Claire has attempted to become some kind of God through her creations, through her experiments with plants. Her daughter has accused her of doing this precisely:

ELIZABETH: Something does tell me this is wrong. To do what – what –

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<sup>6</sup> See also Galbus 2000: 92 for a similar standpoint regarding the meaning of Claire’s murder.

<sup>7</sup> See Smith 1999: 60- 77.

<sup>8</sup> See Diamond 1995: 127.

<sup>9</sup> Dymkowski also argues that the end of *The Verge* “is to be understood symbolically rather than realistically” (1988: 101), a point Ozieblo also agrees with (2006c: np).

DICK: What God did?

ELIZABETH: Well – yes. Unless you do it to make them better – to do it just to *do* it – doesn't seem right to me. (77, author's emphasis)

Indeed, Glaspell also visualises Claire's firm intention to become god-like in the plant that presides in the greenhouse. About the Edge Vine Glaspell says that "*You might see the form of a cross in it, if you happened to think it that way*" (58). The significance of the shape of the Edge Vine, recalling a cross, turns Claire into a kind of Christ figure, "a sacrificial victim of the established order" (Gainor 1989: 95). The Edge Vine is her cross, her intention to do something for humanity, to show that there are other forms and that convention should be avoided. Drew Eisenhauer has also suggested that to establish this link between Claire and the figure of God Glaspell reworks key literary figures that had already done so. Eisenhauer sees in Claire's laboratory and tower a reminiscence of the gothic setting Mary Shelley created for Dr. Frankenstein, another human being trying to become God. Eisenhauer also argues this idea of Claire's godlike characterisation in what he sees "a kind of Promethean metaphor of the 'divine' powers of creation – Claire literally transfers her body heat and life force to the plants in the greenhouse she creates" (2006: 132). I agree with Eisenhauer's discussion, for I also believe that Glaspell suggests Claire's wish to become similar to God by linking her to Prometheus. Prometheus stole fire, the symbol of life, in the same way that Claire gives all her heat to the plants. Even more, Glaspell makes a Prometheus out of Claire as she makes her command over the heating, turning it off in the house and directing it towards the greenhouse, Claire's place of creation.

Therefore, once Claire has failed in turning into a goddess by means of creating new life, and not only life, but a form of life that would fit her belief in free forms, she is forced to turn to the other end of God's privileges: to take life. The relationship between Claire killing her plants and murdering Tom has already been suggested. Her plants keep on the verge of a new form as well as Tom's surname, Edgeworthy, includes the noun "edge." As Ben-Zvi has said, Glaspell gives this surname to Tom to show that he is "a human surrogate for the timid plant that hovered on the edge and retreated to safety in convention" (1982: 26). Glaspell also shows the relationship between Tom and this plant proxemically near the end of the play. When Claire is left alone to examine *Breath of Life* the stage directions reads as follows,

*CLAIRE steps nearer her creation. She looks into what hasn't been. With her breath, and by a gentle moving of her hands, she fans it into fuller openness. As she does this TOM returns and from outside is looking in at her. Softly he opens the door and comes in. She does not know that he is there. In the way she looks at the flower he looks at her. (97)*

Claire examines her unsuccessful creation with her hands, and it is also with her own hands that she will strangle Tom. Claire looks at the flower as Tom looks at her, the connection between Tom and Breath of Life has Claire, as creatrix and scythe, as its nexus. Interestingly, earlier in the play Tom had confessed he had seen himself in a dream as an “ugly plant” (73), maybe as another of Claire’s belongings she can destroy as she wishes. Moreover, it must be highlighted that Tom claims, “I would [stop my existence] for Claire – if it were the way to help her” (71). It could be possible that Tom accepts his role of sacrificial goat so that Claire can finally be a goddess. Tom’s remark that Claire must find peace is what unchains the action, and not merely that he offers “romantic love,” as several critics have suggested. While all the characters praise her Breath of Life, Claire cannot rejoice in what others consider her triumph. She rejects the peace found in this temporary success, because “Peace is what the struggle knows in moments very far apart. Peace – that is not a place to rest” (97). Claire, as many other female characters in Glaspell’s plays, such as Allie Mayo or Madeline, finds that life is in the struggle, not in peace, that is, not in conformity to what might be seen as the little successes in life. Claire needs to go beyond, and that is why I think she kills Tom. As Brenda Murphy observes, “in order to fulfil her creative potential, or destiny, Claire has to destroy Tom Edgeworthy as she has destroyed the Edge Vine, and the act of destruction gives her the same kind of Dionysian ecstasy, as she gives her ‘gift’ to the Breath of Life” (2005: 201). Moreover, Claire’s murder can also be understood as an act of extreme love for Tom, as “a gift” (Bottoms 1998: 143). Claire feels that Tom is in danger of being trapped by conformity. In the same way that Claire rejoiced that her son David died, so that he did not change into a dull person, into a form “held,” she liberates Tom from becoming a form “held,” trapped in conventionality.

Besides resembling the figure of God in her decision to kill Tom, Margit Sichert also sees the relationship between Claire and God in the symbol of the lantern that appears in *The Verge*. Sichert successfully reads the lantern in the tower as indicative of the godless state of the world:





Although Glaspell presents Claire as the Christ figure here, seemingly finally escaping all social bonds, the locus of that liberation is ironically problematic. Glaspell's climax permanently reinscribes her heroine in the ultimate patriarchal structure, as Claire embraces emblems of the Protestant Church and all it historically represented for women. Rather than a release, this ending marks Claire's failure to achieve an independent feminist identity – her ultimate recognition of the inescapability of the patriarchy. (1989: 96)

Similarly, Hinz-Bode believes that Claire's use of the hymn to express herself "entails the inevitability of woman's renewed imprisonment" (2006b: 165). This hymn, however, is another means Claire employs to manifest her final salvation and her ultimate escape from structures, from her victimage of location; the achievement of her goal. Ben-Zvi has pointed out that this hymn is a reversal of Expressionism, since the hymn replaces the *Schrei*, the scream. I agree with Ben-Zvi on this observation, but I do not share her belief that "Nearer My God to Thee" is "sung not in exultation but in madness, by a woman unable to triumph over societal forces assailing her" (2005: 244). A close observation of the manner in which this hymn is uttered reveals the opposite, Claire's final victory. The fragmented way in which Claire utters "Nearer My God to Thee" forces us to pay close attention to each word and to each one of her movements accompanying what she says. Her surprise and emphasis on "God" imply that she feels "Nearer" to him, and taking this point a bit further, I would say that she is so near that she feels that she has become Him after killing Tom and destroying all conventions. As Murphy points out, what Glaspell suggests with Claire's hymn is that "Claire the creator is now nearer to divinity herself, having smashed through conventional morality and established her own morality as a Nietzschean *Übermensch*" (2005: 202). Being Godlike, giving and taking life, is her "cross," as the form of the Edge Vine had symbolised. This is also her cross, because to demonstrate that she is Godlike she had to kill the "man she loves" as her last look at Tom's corpse suggests. As Claire had advanced, "If one ever does get out, I suppose it is – quite unexpectedly, and perhaps – a bit terribly" (63). To get out of family, society, and place in itself, all the factors of Claire's victimage of location, Claire does something unexpected and terrible: killing Tom.

Consequently, as advanced earlier, the murder of Tom cannot be read in realistic terms at all, because this act is what finally erects Claire into a modern heroine. As an early critic observed,

Clearly, a woman who strangles the man she loves, as Claire at the end of this play strangles Tom, is not an agreeable woman to live with, and the strangulation cannot be condoned if you do not admit the possible value of the experiment in hand, any more than the destruction of a rabbit by a vivisectionist can be condoned on any other ground than that of its possible scientific value. [...] It seems to me that Claire is better regarded as an explorer. She has the explorer's itch to venture into the unknown. She spurns her family and her friends because of the irresistible urge that is in her to discover what lies in the mysterious 'out there.' (Fajeun 1925: 708)

Significantly, through her act Claire feels that in this way she has "Saved – myself" (100), triumphing over the societal forces that were assailing her in her own way, and beating in this way her geopathology. Fajeun noted that the importance of Claire's act must not be separated from Glaspell's desired effect upon her audience: "And I am grateful to Claire because by her example she recalls me or pushes me onto something nearer to the next life" (1925: 708). It is not, thus, that Claire "has lost her sense of self for good" (Hinz-Bode 2006b: 163), but that Claire's self-chosen identity cannot be defined in terms of tradition and what is considered right behaviour. Only a few contemporary critics of Glaspell's times read the end of *The Verge* as a supreme symbol of freedom and of one's right to decide on their own identity. Claire could be seen as the freest female character in Glaspell's plays. She manages to release herself from heredity, from environment, from duties, from conventions, and from family ties. Stephen Rathburn wrote the most positive review of *The Verge* in these terms: "Three cheers for Claire! If she is insane let us have more insanity! Freedom is the greatest of all words ... Claire made her own great charter, and we should pray for strength to follow her example. If we could, there would follow a race of supermen that Nietzsche himself would have applauded" (qtd. in Murphy 2005: 203). Agreeing with Rathburn, I also believe that Claire is a symbolic example Glaspell employs to teach us that we are imprisoned and should embrace life by struggling to be free.

### **7.3 Subversion of Power Geometry**

Glaspell consistently questions the rules that govern places in terms of power. In some of her plays her characters' principle of departure is enacted as a subversion of the rules of power geometry, when those characters usually disempowered beat their victimage of location by assuming their right to power. Precisely, this is the main means by which characters avoid their victimage of location in *Trifles*. We have seen that the onstage

farm is representative of ill-placement for Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters, and though, at the end of the play they can be said to escape this victimage of location, since they abandon the farm physically, it must be noted that they leave only to go to their farms, to their own ill-placements. Throughout this thesis, I have discussed that through their “discovery” of what Minnie’s problem with place was, what Glaspell does is to show Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters’s geopathology. Due to this process of identification with what they think was Minnie’s problem, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters manage to depart from their victimage of location. They depart from the rules of patriarchy through their silent rebellion, by subverting power geometry, as this section discusses.

In spite of the fact that several critics see in the end of *Trifles* a subjugation of women to the rules of patriarchy,<sup>10</sup> the truth is that they revolt against it. In the first place, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters become members of a jury of her peers they were not entitled to form at that time. Until women were granted the right to vote, women “suffered from the injustice of men’s law” (France 1987: 151), as they were unable to be members of juries. Ann Jones also says in this concern, “the laws that deprived women of rights and made them dependent upon men made them subject to tyranny” (1980: 116). In *Trifles*, it is obvious that Glaspell highlights the necessity of a jury of her peers. I agree with Patricia Bryan’s belief that:

Glaspell’s story raises questions about the stories told and accepted in the courtroom, how they both reflect and reinforce prevailing societal assumptions and expectations [...] Readers are left with the overwhelming impression that the stories that would eventually be told in the courtroom would be determined by the underlying biases of the men, who would tell stories and interpret them, and that justice could not be done with such a limited and constrained perspective. (1997: 1297)

Glaspell’s female characters subvert power geometry, guiding us through a discourse that could not be heard in a courtroom. Glaspell shows male power in *Trifles* as the men in the play, who can be seen as the representation of the prosecution in a real trial, “have already decided” from the very beginning “that Mrs. Wright is guilty, and now they have to make this objectively viable” (Stobbs 2002: 239- 240), a fact that proves the unfairness of the legal system and women’s powerlessness. The role of the men in the

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<sup>10</sup> See for instance Stephens 1990: 285.

play is not to look for evidence to find Mr. Wright's assassin, but evidence to incriminate Mrs. Wright. This is the reason why, in turn, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters turn the onstage kitchen into a fictional court, as they present before the audience those important issues which would never be discussed in depth in a trial at that time, i.e. issues such as hard work, isolation, wife beating, childless marriage, and so forth, issues that, as seen throughout this thesis, have been suggested as factors making up these characters' victimage of location. As Ben-Zvi notes: "Not waiting to be given the vote or the right to serve in juries, Glaspell's women have taken the right for themselves" (1992: 158). Significantly, besides Glaspell's contribution to legal discussion, what really should be given importance is that with *Trifles* Glaspell is asking for women's political and social empowerment and rebellion against the mere definition of women as pure and dutiful mothers, wives, daughters and sisters. Susan Koprince notes that in depicting "Minnie Wright's gloomy homestead" Glaspell "criticizes a social system that promotes a stultifying cult of domesticity, that silences and disenfranchises women, and that quashes their desire for self-fulfilment. Seen from this feminist perspective, the 'narrow house' in *Trifles* is not merely an individual farmhouse, but a dwelling that all women inhabit" (2006: 77). That is, Glaspell is making a call here for rebellion against the victimage of location many women suffer from because society only allows them to occupy one place, that of the angel of the house.

Moreover, far from being passive True Women, with *Trifles* Glaspell presents onstage how these women do have power.<sup>11</sup> As powerlessness has been defined as one of the faces of oppression featured by "the lack of that 'authority, status, and sense of self' which would permit a person to be listened to with respect" (Harvey 1993: 56), Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters demonstrate that they have more power than the men in the play, or even themselves, think. Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters begin to revolt against the frustrating tyranny of patriarchal power the very moment that they start playing at being detectives.<sup>12</sup> And it is this new role which allows Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters to

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<sup>11</sup> Regarding this issue of women's assumed powerlessness, Judith K. Russell makes an interesting comparison between the three women in *Trifles* and the powerful Greek Fates (1997: 88- 90). According to this scholar, Mrs. Hale embodies Clotho the Spinner. In fact, we see her mending Minnie's quilt, and as far as the plot develops, she is the main character to weave the story and describe the circumstances leading to murder. Mrs. Peters, in her role as Lachesis the Disposer of Lots, is the one who weighs the evidence and, eventually, determines the direction of justice: the idea of concealing the dead canary is hers. Finally, Minnie stands for Atropos the Cutter of the Thread, the one to carry out the verdict.

<sup>12</sup> See Dymkowski 1988: 93; and Stein 1987: 253- 254.

“perceive to be more sinned against than sinning” (Stein 1987: 255), triggering their subversion of “assumed notions of women’s powerlessness” (Keyssar 1994: 22). Instead of behaving as the passive and naïve women their men think they are, they blur the alleged evidence of Minnie’s crime. That is, very early in the play they disobey the rules of the authority, the County Attorney, as they change the position of things, something the County Attorney worries about: “By the way, has anything been moved? Are things as you left them yesterday... Somebody should have been left here yesterday” (36), and “I would like to see what you take, Mrs. Peters, and keep an eye out for anything that might be of use to us” (39). But once the women are left alone in the kitchen, they erase the evidence that could lead the men in the play to incriminate Minnie. It is ironic to notice that Mrs. Hale’s and Mrs. Peters’s rebellious behaviour takes place in what has been traditionally accepted as the female space, that is, the kitchen. As Fletcher points out, the kitchen is the place where Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters develop their female subversive behaviour, “the almost magical place zone where the women can temporarily subvert male power” (2006: 242). Furthermore, as Carme Manuel points out, these women are very powerful, for they have learnt to move within both realms, that is, men’s and women’s. They have developed a language of silences and gestures to communicate between themselves, but at the same time Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters have learned to cope with men’s language, which is the reason why they conceal what they think will be incriminatory evidence.<sup>13</sup>

The last sentence of the play is worth analysing in this regard, for this sentence is the final enactment that Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters subvert power geometry. After being asked several times about the quilting technique, Mrs. Hale answers back: “(*her hand against her pocket*) We call it – knot it, Mr. Henderson” (45). Critics have debated long about the meaning of this sentence, and most of them agree that it stands for the union of women, the fulcrum of subversion of power geometry, while it makes a reference both to the knot around John Wright’s neck and to “not”, as a negation of what these women think they know about Minnie’s life but which they will never tell.<sup>14</sup> This interpretation of the end of *Trifles* can be considered correct if we take into account

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<sup>13</sup> See Manuel 2000: 60- 61.

<sup>14</sup> See for instance, Alkalay-Gut 1995: 80, Bryan 1997: 1309, Hallgreen 1995: 212- 213, Showalter 1991: 146, Smith 1982: 179, Stein 1987: 255, Sutherland 1978: 323.

the coherence in Glaspell's work regarding the issue of female coalition as a key factor in woman's history, coherence that Veronica Makowsky analyses in *Susan Glaspell's Century of American Women*.<sup>15</sup>

Given the importance that Glaspell gives to women's union to start their subversion of power geometry, a brief explanation of this issue is required. The terms "female bonding" and "sisterhood" have commonly been used to refer to women's union, and they have been discussed in relation to Glaspell's works to some extent. On the one hand, Veronica Makowsky, as many other earlier Glaspellian scholars and feminists, uses the terms "female" and "sisterly solidarity" (1993: 62) to talk about women's bonding in the face of male oppression. Sisterhood has been understood as "the natural and pre-existing relationship that women – especially those pursuing economic reform and revolution – must re-discover" (Stretch 2006: 226), and "groups of women bonded together in either authentic or emblematic friendship, acting as a unit rather than as solitary individuals" (Fletcher 2006: 239)<sup>16</sup>. However, I side with other critics who prefer using the term women's coalition instead of sisterhood or mere female bonding when talking about Glaspell's work. For as Fletcher believes, the extent to which Glaspell saw sisterhoods as completely positive organisms must not be taken for granted: "Glaspell seems to have seen as the alarming side of sisterhood, a code of prescriptive behaviour that punishes expressions of individuality and harms eccentric hearts" (2006: 241). Instead, I believe that what Glaspell shows in her works is "the potential for cross-class alliances among women" (Stretch 2006: 237). Thus, I side with Chandra Mohanty's preference for the term "coalition." As she discusses Robin Morgan's "Planetary Feminism: The Politics of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" (1984) and Beverly Reagon's article "Coalition Politics: Turning the Century" (1983), Mohanty argues:

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<sup>15</sup> See Makowsky 1993: 29- 31.

<sup>16</sup> It is interesting to note the use of the term sisterhood throughout history, and even more as it is applied in feminist studies, and in Glaspell's studies. In "'Rules of the Institution' and Sisterhood" Caroline Violet Fletcher shows how in the rebirth of Glaspell's studies with "A Jury of her Peers" in the 1970s feminist scholars "were part of a radical generation mobilized on behalf of their gender to re-create women's group identity, and the concept of sisterhood comprised an important part of their political rhetoric" (2006: 243). For instance, Victoria Aarons refers to "community bond" in "A Community of Women: Surviving Marriage in the Wilderness" (1986: 10), and Judith Fetterly also talks about female bonding in this sense in her article "Reading about Reading:" (1986: 149). However, present studies, such as Fletcher's itself, do not take for granted that Glaspell was as interested in sisterhood as she might have been in terms such as coalition.

While Morgan uses the notion of sisterhood to construct a cross-cultural unity of women and speaks of 'planetary feminism as the politics of the 21<sup>st</sup> century', Bernice Johnson Reagon uses *coalition* as the basis to talk about the cross-cultural commonality of struggles, identifying *survival*, rather than *shared oppression*, as the ground for coalition. She begins with this valuable reminder: 'You don't go into coalition because you like it. The only reason you would consider trying to team up with somebody who could possibly kill you, is because that's the only way you can figure you can stay alive.' (1997: 90, author's emphasis)

In these terms, I agree that *Trifles* "is not so much about sisterhood as modern critics understand the term, than it is about how two women connect for a contained amount of time to achieve a common goal, but separate afterwards" (Fletcher 2006: 242). As seen throughout this thesis, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters belong to two worlds, accounting for their status, so after the rebellion they carry out together at the Wrights' farm, they separate.<sup>17</sup>

Besides the importance of female coalition for victimage of location, and how this is symbolised in the final sentence of the play, "We call it – knot it", I believe that this ending can be read more radically as far as power geometry is concerned. The fact that Mrs. Hale presses her hand against her pocket, where the dead canary is, works in two directions at the same time. On the one hand, it addresses the fact that she is hiding a piece of evidence in the fashion of those searched for by men (one that suggests anger). Thus, with her hand, Mrs. Hale is providing extra-protection for the clue. On the other hand, as she presses her hand against her pocket, this could express in proxemical terms an act of anger and repression, an image similar to the "macho" one of clenching a fist instead of punching someone. In this reading, Mrs. Hale would be menacing Mr. Henderson and the other men. This is reinforced by the "knot it" as a kind of verbal menace. The fact that this is the last line of the play is very significant and makes this end be open to wider interpretations different from the traditional ones about what critics generally call "women's bonding," and I would say that this reading demonstrates these women's possible potential for murder, their "retaliatory violence" (Fetterley 1986: 153), within the system that oppresses them. Mrs. Hale's gesture reveals the desperate and violent solution to victimage of location many women may find to subvert power geometry and escape thus their ill-placement.

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<sup>17</sup> In Chapter 6.4 I have analysed how Glaspell employs costume to mark Mrs. Hale's and Mrs. Peters's different backgrounds. See p. 287.



Glaspell also suggests Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters's gradual awareness of their power through the way they talk. At the beginning both women speak very little, their sentences are usually crowded with silences and hesitations, and they seem to rely more on what the men say and think than on their own ideas. For instance:

MRS PETERS: Mr Peters says it looks bad for her. Mr Henderson is awful sarcastic in a speech and he'll make fun of her sayin' she didn't wake up [...] They say it was such a- funny way to kill a man, rigging it all up like that.

MRS HALE: That was just what Mr Hale said. There was a gun in the house. He says that's what he can't understand.

MRS PETERS: Mr Henderson said coming out that what was needed for the case was a motive; something to show anger, or – sudden feeling. (40)

In this scene everything these women say is a repetition of men's points of view. But as Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters become more self-confident, more conscious of their own power, their utterances change enormously. Later in the play, instead of simply echoing what they heard the men say, as in the examples above, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters begin their utterances with "I think" (43), "I knew" (44), "I know" (44), "I guess" (45), and so on. Both women begin to recognise their power as thinking and acting subjects, and consequently they start using the pronoun "I" more often than before. Their new awareness of their own power is also what leads them to a communal union in the final "we" in "We call it – knot it."

Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters's evolutionary subversion of power geometry is also revealed in the kind of women they represent. Mrs. Hale is closer to the New Woman from the very beginning, willing to defend Minnie. In contrast, Mrs. Peters seems a True Woman at the beginning<sup>18</sup>. The development of Mrs. Peters is very meaningful in this regard. At the beginning her only sign of identity is linked to her husband's job. She is the sheriff's wife, and as such she defends the men saying that "it's their duty" (39) to snoop around the kitchen, something Mrs. Hale despises. Mrs. Peters is entirely dedicated to fulfilling what her husband orders, that is, to collect some of Minnie's belongings. She also excuses the men's laugh at "trifles" because "Of course they've got awful important things on their minds" (41). That is, as the sheriff's wife she has

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<sup>18</sup> The terms "New Woman" and "True Woman" have been explained in Chapter 5.4, pp. 223- 224.

learned to say that women's things are trifles as well, and to believe that men's things are much more important. Nevertheless, most scholars also agree that her role changes from pole to pole throughout the play.<sup>19</sup> Once she comes closer to Mrs. Hale and Minnie's situation, and once they are on the same side, Mrs. Peters ignores that "a sheriff's wife is married to the law" (45), and when the County Attorney discovers that there was a bird in the farm and asks about it, Mrs. Peters supports Mrs. Hale's lie:

MRS HALE: (*putting more quilt pieces over the box*) We think the – cat got it.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: (*preoccupied*) Is there a cat?

(*MRS HALE glances in a quick covert way at MRS PETERS.*)

MRS PETERS: Well, not now. They're superstitious, you know. They leave. (43)

Even though she knows that Mrs. Wright "didn't have a cat", because "She's got that feeling some people have about cats – being afraid of them" (42), Mrs. Peters lies consciously and later she participates in the deletion of the evidence they have found, which they think could be used against Mrs. Wright. In this manner, Mrs. Peters rejects her identity as the sheriff's wife to adopt her new identity as a woman conscious of other women's problems as well as her own. She adopts a new identity that makes her rebel against her husband through her lie and the deletion of clues, subverting power geometry.

In this manner, and triggered by Minnie's alleged murder, by the end of the play both pioneer women are potential New Women that do not accept the rules of patriarchy nor the identity imposed on them. "These women experience their own anagnorsis, challenging and rejecting male-defined norms, including such concepts as woman's honor, abstract justice, and the male's right to dominate and control," says Burke (1996: 63- 64). At the end of the play Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peter have contributed to the dramatic discourse of geopathology in two ways. On the one hand, they solve what they think is Minnie's geopathology by first, understanding how the place she lived in was one of the main factors that could have led to her alleged murder of her husband, and second, by liberating her from the offstage prison she is kept in. Since they have removed all the evidence from the kitchen, the male characters will not be able to find Minnie guilty. On the other hand, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters overcome their own

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<sup>19</sup> See for instance Ben-Zvi 1989b: 151, and Hedges 1995: 63.

geopathology as they come back to their homes with changed identities. Understanding the rules of power geometry, they have departed from their roles of dutiful and subjugated wives to assume their new power.

#### **7.4 Reshaping Home Physically**

Not all of the solutions that Glaspell offers her characters to escape from places that constrain them are as extreme as Minnie's and Claire's. Indeed, it could be said that one of the most recurrent principles to win over geopathology that can be found in Glaspell's dramaturgy is as simple as re-decoration enacted on the onstage places. If as has been discussed throughout this thesis, many of Glaspell's characters are victims of location because the places they are forced to inhabit impose upon them an identity or role they reject, it could be said that a possible means of departure from ill-placement is provided by changing the spatial configuration of the room these characters are placed in so that these locations suit their identities.

Characters who make changes in the places they dwell speak through redecoration. About changes in space Henri Lefèbvre says, "A mere change of position, or a change in a place's surroundings, is enough to precipitate an object's passage into the light: what was covert becomes overt, what was cryptic becomes limpidly clear" (1991: 183). That is, re-decoration is a powerful ideological tool, which although can be regarded as simple and naïve at first sight, it can be charged with impressive meanings. "To change life we must first change space," says Lefèbvre (1991: 190), a statement many of Glaspell's characters turn into action. For the present analysis, thus, a semiotic approach is vital, since usually "Objects on the stage tend to merge into the background, and they become meaningful only when handled, looked at, or referred to" (McAuley 2000: 91). Once the stage property is moved, reshaped or brought or taken out from the stage space, its meaning goes even beyond the symbolical quality it could have earlier, a whole spectrum of significance opens before our eyes. It gains a new meaning and reveals information about why it has been changed.

The first case in Glaspell's plays that exemplifies redecoration as a means of changing life, and thus escaping geopathology, is found in *Suppressed Desires*. In Chapter 3 I discussed how Glaspell and Cook present onstage the struggle for space

within a bohemian couple. As argued earlier, a very interesting aspect of this play is that it reveals a female character, Henrietta, struggling to have an identity of her own, and since this identity affects Steve's life, both physically and psychologically, she is told to come back to her traditional role.<sup>20</sup> Significantly, Henrietta is the first character in Glaspell's plays that tries to change her identity and the place she lives in. Besides telling Mabel, who wanted to occupy Henrietta's place as Steve's wife, to go away (making another character depart), the solution that Henrietta and Steve find to solve the invasion that psychoanalysis had carried out in their studio apartment consists in getting rid of all the volumes on this topic. To Steve's question, "Will you clear off my work-table so the Journal of Morbid Psychology doesn't stare me in the face when I'm trying to plan a house?" Henrietta replies, "I'll *burn* the Journal of Morbid Psychology!" (51, author's emphasis). With his question, Steve brings to the front two key elements of geopathology in this play: the house and the element disturbing its peace, the psychology books. It is not merely that his work as an architect is disturbed by Henrietta's books. But what Steve's petition reveals clearly is that what has disturbed his work, his house, and his interests is precisely his wife's interests, which have been taken to the extreme in this comedy.

Henrietta's decision to burn the books pleases Steve and prompts the happy reconciliation at the end of the play. Murphy observes that at the end of the play "it is Steve who takes control of the house, re-establishing the power hierarchy that had been undermined by Henrietta's intrusion of psychoanalysis into their relations" (2005: 72), and I would add, to their apartment. About this "happy ending," Kristina Hinz-Bode also believes that it "seems to condemn [Henrietta's] move into the (male) realm of public discourse" and that Steve finally "regained control over the situation, and – as he has the final word in the play – he has successfully wrestled the floor from his wife" (2006b: 232). Similarly, Marcia Noe believes that, "Traditional marriage values that were questioned earlier in the play are ultimately reaffirmed when Henrietta, threatened with the loss of her husband, repudiates psychoanalysis and Mabel returns to Chicago and her own rather conventional dentist-husband" (2002: 151). That is, according to most critics, Henrietta goes back to her place as wife, giving up her battle for the living-room.

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<sup>20</sup> See pp. 102- 106 for this discussion.

However, and in spite of the “happy ending” that has led many scholars to rightly question the seriousness of this play, it seems to me that the ending is not closed, and that Steve’s newly-regained control over the apartment will not last. On the contrary, it seems rather improbable that on the basis of where the characters live and Henrietta’s commitment to the feminist cause, the couple will live happily, and traditionally, ever after. All throughout the play the Washington Arch in New York Washington Square has been seen through the window of their apartment, what has been analysed as a visual aid to characterise Henrietta as a bohemian. Thus, the Washington Square Arch is employed as a constant reminder of the fact that Henrietta and Steve live in a bohemian atmosphere, and that they will not escape from the influence of bohemianism unless they move out of this area. Moreover, Henrietta is a member of the Liberal Club. Both conditions make their apartment an obvious target for new influences on Henrietta that will invade the place Steve wants to keep in peace. Henrietta’s compromise to burn her books does not mean she is going to become a True Woman. Deciding that she wants her husband to stay does not imply she will turn into a traditional woman. Indeed, all she says is that she will get rid of her books on psychoanalysis, but she does not say anything about quitting the Liberal Club. Thus, in keeping with the features of this female character, one can easily imagine Henrietta bringing home some new craze, such as Birth Control, that will make her work passionately, and probably, invade again Steve’s work place with her books.

In *Bernice* characters also try to reconcile identity and space by changing the decoration of the room. Characters first change the configuration of the room to avoid the memories of Bernice that the place bears, especially in the case of Father and Craig.<sup>21</sup> Their final reconciliation with her death will also be evidenced through their reconciliation with the place as Bernice had it. As one critic says: “The superficial changes that the characters make in Bernice’s room in an attempt to distance themselves from their loss are rescinded at the end of the play: the room is given ‘back to Bernice’” (Czerepinski 1995: 149). Craig, supported by the alleged immense love that his wife had for him, according to Abbie’s lie, is the most interested in keeping everything as Bernice had it, so that he can maintain this new identity of his wife that suits what he wants to believe, i.e. that she committed suicide for him. Close to the end of the play,

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<sup>21</sup> See Chapter 6.4, pp. 288- 289 for this discussion.

Craig makes up his mind that he does not want any new people or elements in the room: “I don’t want things to be different. Not now – in the last hour. It’s still Bernice’s house” (225). He does not even want the minister to come: “Don’t bring him here. He can go – (*stops*) there, if he wants to. Where – we have to go. Not here. In her own house. The very last thing” (210). Nor family friends, such as the Aldrichs, who are to be taken to the south room, far from this room (224). Craig decides then to re-arrange Bernice’s things as they were at the beginning of the play: the pillow returns to its place under the window and the vase too. He asks for the tea table, which Abbie brings, and he puts the chair before this table. Abbie helps him, “*until [the room] is as it used to be*” (228).

Interestingly, Craig does not only leave things as Bernice had them, but he also endeavours to re-arrange the room as she would like it to be. That is, his performative acts come to enact the actions his wife would do; in his attempt to overcome the loss of Bernice and to maintain her living quality in her house. It is at this point that the outside nature comes inside the house, the outside nature that, as discussed earlier, represents Bernice too, because of the close link between the absent protagonist and the woods.<sup>22</sup> Craig goes out to pick up some red and yellow branches, the ones Bernice used to pick up and put in a vase at this time of the year, and he arranges them as Bernice would do it. Then Glaspell makes Bernice invade completely her room when Margaret, who comes out of Bernice’s room, leaves the door open. As Father says: “you have given the room back to Bernice” (229). Instead of considering that there is “death in the next room” (185), they now see life, the life they feel Bernice taught them to live.

The solution these characters find in *Bernice* to cope with the presence of the absent character on the stage space is to ally themselves with it. When they all understand that Bernice’s death does not mean the end of life, but the continuation of all she taught them, independently of what kind of woman they think she was or of what Bernice’s real intention with her lie was, as seen before, they are able to cope with her physical absence and her metaphysical presence. The door to the room where her corpse has been throughout the play, and which was firstly closed, is from now on left open. Moreover, as they acknowledge that Bernice will always be with them, Glaspell creates

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<sup>22</sup> See pp. 293- 294 for my analysis of how Bernice is present in the offstage, but visible, outside place and the other characters’ proxemic and verbal relation with this outside.

a wonderful gesture to symbolise all this and close the play: Margaret “*closes her hand, uncloses it in a slight gesture of freeing what she would not hurt*” (230). Using her body to signify what she cannot say with words, Margaret expresses her idea that Bernice’s love was meant to be perceived by all around. Thus, with all these final redecorations and Margaret’s gesture, Glaspell shows that her characters get over their victimage of location. The onstage characters accept Bernice’s death and her metaphysical presence, and Bernice, who had won over geopathology with her death, will have the command over the house and its dwellers forever as everything is physically as she left it, a constant reminder of her power.

The play where Glaspell works more clearly on redecoration as her characters’ means of escaping “place as a problem” is *Chains of Dew*. The traditional configuration of the library of the Standishes changes the moment Nora arrives from New York and her Birth Control posters and leaflets start taking control of the room visually.<sup>23</sup> It has already been mentioned that the portrait of the Sistine Madonna had a leading role within this room, guiding Dotty’s role, and that she wants to get rid of it. This scene deserves being analysed as Dotty’s means of escaping ill-placement. When Dotty discovers the poster of the mother with nine children and the mother with two, she is happy that “At last we have something to take the place of the Sistine Madonna! (*Takes a chair to the Madonna*)” (II, 2, 20). Now that she knows how she wants the room to look, it is interesting to notice that she does not ask Seymore about hanging the posters. Though before she claimed that she had wanted to take down the Madonna to “have things pleasant” for her husband (II, 1, 3), the fact that she does not ask him to cooperate is meaningful. Dotty knows that this change in the room might not please her husband. And this time she wants to get rid of the Madonna not to make things pleasant for Seymore, but to make the room pleasant for herself. Her role as a subjected wife begins to change here at the same time that she is redecorating the room.

The idea that traditions are difficult to get rid of physically is symbolised here in the difficulties O’Brien and Dotty have trying to put the Sistine Madonna away. Meaningfully they “can’t reach it out” (II, 2, 20). This difficulty also symbolises that the

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<sup>23</sup> This issue has been discussed in Chapter 3.2.1, pp. 96- 98, as part of Nora’s invasion of the Standishes’ house, and Chapter 6.2, pp. 258- 262, for the contribution of these posters to the image of the Buried Child.

change of identity that Dotty is beginning to experience will be a hard task to accomplish. On the whole, geopathology, with its physical and psychological dimensions, is not an easy disorder to get rid of. The strength required to beat geopathology, even through apparently simplistic redecoration, is revealed as Dotty needs a stick and a hammer to fulfil her goal. Once armed and with the motto “Down with the Madonna!” (II, 2, 22) “*They get it down*” (II, 2, 23). She then “*begins to pound*”, hammering the wall to put up the poster of the mother with nine children, as the scene ends. In a symbolic way Dotty is hammering the walls that imprison her, the walls of respectability and moral codes she is so “sick” of: “Walls? Who cares about the *wall*? (*Nailing down the words with the hammer*)” (II, 2, 23, author’s emphasis). The ideal of Dotty as a passive woman is now allegorically destroyed. With her movements Dotty demonstrates that she is a New Woman, with “a sense of identity, of independence” no other character in this play possesses (Waterman 1966: 84). She is strong now. Furthermore, the portrait of the Sistine Madonna is not only relegated from its presiding place on the wall. For the rest of the scenes it is still onstage, but facing the rear wall. The position of this painting is very interesting because although it has been removed from its place, it does not disappear completely from the room. Its presence, even though facing the wall, symbolises again how difficult it is to get rid of traditions and the given role of mother. Moreover, as the painting does not abandon the room, its return to its place, and consequently Dotty’s return to her role as dutiful mother and wife, is a possibility to bear in mind.

In keeping with the changes Dotty makes in the room, she also changes herself physically to fit her new identity. Dotty had already suggested how she would like to have her hair bobbed when Seymore cut Angelica’s hair. Dotty then goes to the mirror and arranges her hair as if it were bobbed (II, 1, 11- 12). Once they have Nora’s model before them and in order to suit her new role as the first president of the first birth control league of the Mississippi Valley, Mother bobs Dotty’s hair. Dotty’s shocking appearance in Act II, scene 2 is described in terms of her hair and the enormous change it provokes: “*Her hair is bobbed. It is extraordinarily becoming. She is young and gay and irresistible. The Dotty that never had a chance is gleaming there*” (II, 2, 15). Her hair becomes the symbol of her new identity:



DOTTY: Well, here I am. How do you like me? (*She gives her head a shake, fluffing out her bob*)

SEYMORE: (*In the terrible voice of the outraged male*) Who cut my wife's hair? (*Turning upon Nora*) You come here, come into my house, breaking up my life, cutting my – cutting my – What do you mean by cutting my wife's hair? [...]

MOTHER: (*Very casually*) I cut Dotty's hair.

SEYMORE: (*Unable to believe it*) You? You? So – even my own mother. *Even my mother.*

MOTHER: Even your mother. I think I cut it very well, considering it's the first hair I ever bobbed. Of course, I had Nora's to pattern from.

SEYMORE: Yes, indeed – you had Nora to pattern from.

MOTHER: But I shouldn't have ventured upon it if I hadn't seen you cut the doll's hair. (*Gets the bobbed doll, compares it to Dotty*)

SEYMORE: A doll is a doll – a wife is –

NORA: Is what?

SEYMORE: (*Thundering at Dotty*) What will you do when you want it back?

DOTTY: Oh, I'm never going to want it back. I just love it! (*Musses it affectionately*) It makes me feel different. I know now, Seymore, what you meant – isn't it amazing how much you cut when you cut the hair! Of course, I never would have done it if I hadn't known you liked bobbed hair. [...] It makes me feel as if life were beginning all over again! I feel so – (*with a lift of her body*) light. Cutting your hair – goes to your head! (II, 2, 15- 17, author's emphasis)

The revolution that Seymore began unconsciously in Act II scene 1 when he cut the doll's hair is blossoming now. Seymore's emphasis on using the possessive "my" to refer to the house, to Dotty, and even to Dotty's hair, highlights that he is taking all these changes as a direct attack on him and his properties. He is what the audience had foreseen from the beginning. Despite his modernist discourses about freedom, he is a Midwestern male who "calls up Puritan antecedents, to which he is true patriarchal heir" (Ben-Zvi 2005: 259). The fact that the women come together for the small matter of Dotty's bobbed hair, something Seymore reproaches to Nora, is significant related to women's struggle about ill-placement, and in more general terms about women's movement, a wink at women's union, as in *Trifles*, for suffrage and birth control. The change in Dotty's hair has brought her a new identity. She feels alive, different, a new woman, a modern one. But it is significant that for this new identity she required a model to follow, and this is incarnated in Angelica, the doll, and Nora. So it seems that identity is something which can be constructed and changed, but which requires to be modelled on a given pattern. This idea will be developed later when referring to the

dolls. As the main physical aspect that reflects Dotty's new identity is her new haircut, throughout the following scenes Dotty is described shaking her bob and touching her hair (II, 2, 15, 17, 18, 22; III, 13). One of the most daring times Dotty shakes her bob takes place in front of Dean Davis. That Dotty finds it necessary to highlight what she has done to her hair in front of a representative from the church is very interesting. When Dean Davis comes into the room and "*finds it hard to look at anything but Dotty's bobbed hair,*" (III, 13) and his "*Eyes glued to Dotty's bobbed hair*" (III, 16), Dotty emphasises her new look by running her hand through her hair (III, 13), underlying with her gestures her pride in her new identity and her rejection of the traditional role of mother the church also imposes.

Dotty is fully conscious of her new appearance and role as a modern woman, so besides redecorating the room, the way she moves around the library is also changed, in sharp contrast to her behaviour in previous scenes. Dotty behaved like a servant to her husband's wishes.<sup>24</sup> But it could be said she takes possession of the room when with her new appearance she enters the library with a memorandum in her hand, not with an ashtray to serve Seymore as she did in Act II scene 1. And instead of answering the phone to take down messages for Seymore or to arrange a social meeting to have tea, she is on the phone to arrange meetings for the Birth Control movement (III, 1). The phone is used again a bit later to demonstrate how Dotty has changed her role. This time the phone rings and Dotty asks Nora to go down to check whether it is a "birth control phone" (III, 27). She is now too busy writing an essay on birth control with O'Brien to answer the phone. This is more than what Seymore can bear. The stage direction describes him as follows, "*He gives up writing and is thinking over more than he can bear*" (III, 1). Seymore, whom I have labelled a faked geopathic character,<sup>25</sup> complains about the chains that tie him to Bluff City, which he considers a prison. But this is a prison he likes, and it is therefore, when his prison is reshaped and totally changed, that he has an actual problem with place. Mother realises that Seymore is suffering from what his space is experiencing:

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<sup>24</sup> In Chapter 5.3, pp. 218- 220 I discuss how Glaspell depicts Dotty's traditional role and subjection to her husband by making her perform those activities that keep her fixed in this role.

<sup>25</sup> See pp. 146- 147, and 221- 222, where I discuss the aspects that reveal Seymore's faked geopathology.

MOTHER: Would it be possible to think highly enough of personal liberty to feel a man had a right to keep himself in bondage if he wanted to? [...] Nora, stop and think. Can you imagine Seymore without his – chains? (*They gaze upon the dark picture*) No. No, we have some humanity. You know – in your heart you know we must leave him his bondage. Anything else would destroy his character. His soul must be soul to an alien. It's made that way. Here with us – longing for you, whom he cannot have. There with you – the pull of us, to whom he must return. Don't you see what a fix we put him in when we get together? [...] He must always have the *other* thing. He must be what you aren't – what you can't understand. (*Looking around, in a low voice, as if saying what she has no business to say*) That lets him out from meeting either thing face to face. He never had the face-to-faceness. (*Again looking stealthily around*) Don't you know how nice and superior you feel when you're with someone who isn't what you are? It's such a – wonderful loneliness. (III, 29-30, author's emphasis)

Mother recognises the self-inflicted geopathology Seymore feels. He cannot be happy either in Bluff City or New York because this unhappiness is what keeps him alive, and as Mother suggests, safe. Moving from the Midwest to the East and changing his identity accordingly allows him to avoid any confrontation in these places and with their respective inhabitants. All he has to do to feel at ease is to move from one place to another, so that he can enjoy his wonderful loneliness. This is the reason why, as Mother explicitly claims, the coming together of his two worlds make him totally unable to stand his very house. Moreover, as his two worlds have come together he has lost the leading roles he had in both. His New York friends find the Standish women pleasant and worthy to engage in conversation with and vice versa, which leaves Seymore metaphorically out of place at his own home.

The dramatic solution Glaspell constructs for Seymore's geopathology comes in two phases. First, by expelling the "invaders," his New York friends, and second, through redecoration. Dotty and Mother ally to make Seymore think they prefer to go back to the way things were before Nora's arrival, and that he is still the needed guide of their lives. In this concern, Dotty's tears at the end of the play are worth considering. Most critics agree that these tears are the proof of Dotty's painful sacrifice for her husband, that she has to give up her ambition so that Seymore can be happy. For instance, Hinz-Bode claims that "Dotty cannot control her tears at the thought of her lost new life while Seymore restores his world to normalcy" (2006b: 129). Gardiner notes that Dotty's "sobs signify a plaintive mourning wail for the sacrifice of Diantha",

her real self (2006: 195), and Barbara Ozieblo believes that in “Diantha’s charade of sobbing submission at the end [...] we can only sympathize with her and acknowledge the power of the social more that determine her sacrifice” (2006b: 22).

Nevertheless, there are some factors in the play that would make Dotty’s sacrifice unlikely, and thus, her sobs could be read differently. One of the reasons why Dotty’s sacrifice seems improbable is that “there is nothing in Seymore’s depiction of character that renders his wife’s dramatic sacrifice convincing in the end” (Hinz-Bode 2006a: 213). And as Ozieblo considers, Dotty’s sobbing “could easily antagonize a thinking audience; it could also reduce Diantha to a sentimental heroine who unthinkingly obeys the Zarathrustan precept ‘Let woman be a plaything, pure and fine like a precious stone’” (2006b: 22). And these features, certainly, do not fit into the coherence of Dotty as a character. For Glaspell has shown that Dotty is quite a strong character once she has found her identity. Even before meeting Nora, Dotty had already deviated from the role of the traditional wife, as seen earlier, attempting to remove the Sistine Madonna and learning poetry “seeking to empower herself” (Ozieblo 2006b: 18). Thus, instead of thinking that Glaspell has constructed in Dotty a faulty character, maybe the problem lies on the interpretation of what has been taken as Dotty’s sacrifice and what some critics have seen as proof, namely, Dotty’s tears.<sup>26</sup> As Ozieblo has noted, while it is true that Dotty and Mother submit, apparently, to “the mold imposed by their established social roles. It would, however, be unjust to consider them ‘morally dead and rotten’” (2006b: 18). I believe that in her sobs, Dotty behaves as a well-trained melodrama actress, pretending she is sobbing, so that Seymore can save her: “Please, stop crying, Dotty. I will make things just what they were before” (III, 37). Little by little the room recuperates its former shape. Before going, Nora removes the family exhibit (III, 37), and the Sistine Madonna is inevitably to be back:

SEYMORE: They’ve gone. Can’t you see? They’ve gone now; they won’t be back. (*It does not cheer her*) I’ll tell you. We’ll hang the Sistine Madonna! That’s the stuff – put her right back where she was before. Just as if nothing had ever happened [...] (*He takes the Madonna,*

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<sup>26</sup> It is important to note that *Chains of Dew* was produced upon a manuscript version and that Glaspell, then in Greece, did not supervise the rehearsal process. Thus, one cannot take for granted, and less taking into account Glaspell’s construction of strong and clever female characters, that Dotty is the first of Glaspell’s characters to surrender so easily to the rules of patriarchy, enslaving herself again into the four walls of her house.

who had been standing face to the wall. [*Feeling*] of the other pictures) Well, you certainly drove them in.

DOTTY: And now they've got to come out.

SEYMORE: We'll get them out. Where's that – anything – the scissors will do.

(*Dotty takes the scissors from the mother, who still hovers between the annihilation and the restoration of the Seymore doll. He works the nails loose.*)

SEYMORE: You can see now, Dotty, that's easier to do things than to undo them. And you've made holes in the wall.

DOTTY: (*With malicious satisfaction*) Yes, there will be holes in the wall.

SEYMORE: (*Taking up the big picture*) But the Madonna will cover them. See? The Madonna will cover it all up. There we are! Just as good as we were before. Everything just as it was before. (III, 38- 39)

It is easy to realise that it is only Seymore who wants things back. Despite the fact that the nails are strongly “in,” symbolising how excited Dotty was about her new identity, Seymore works hard to take the posters down. Meanwhile, Mother and Dotty do not help him to make the room look as it did before, they just witness how things are getting back to their former state. Dotty even promises to let her hair grow, the symbol of the traditional and subservient wife Seymore needs (III, 40).

However, the quotation above uncovers a seed of hope for Dotty and Mother, a seed that reveals that, to some extent, they will never be the subjugated women they were before, and that they can escape their victimage of location through their new awareness of the power of place. Dotty's “*malicious satisfaction*” that there will always be holes in the wall reflects her real self. I agree with Ben-Zvi's remark that

The denouement of the play is Glaspell's reworking of the ending of *A Doll's House*, but instead of having the doll-wife reject the posturing husband she no longer idealizes, Glaspell's Dotty stays, fully aware of her husband's failings and of the fact that he needs her more than she needs him. She does, however, take what the stage directions indicate is ‘malicious satisfaction’ in knowing that behind the Madonna ‘there will be holes in the wall.’ (2005: 259)

The Madonna can cover up the stratum of the new things that invaded the house and which Dotty and Mother enjoyed, but the holes will be the reminiscence of them. Surfaces are not that important, but what is underneath, and this applies both for physical appearance and the decoration of the room. Dotty and Mother are clever enough to deceive Seymore, to make him think they are pleased with their roles as

mother and wife, but the truth is different. And the compromise Dotty extracts from Seymore that she will go with him when he goes to New York does not but support this point. Accepting to accompany Seymore to New York as “Dotty Dimple” (III, 40), in her role of docile wife, is but a promise Dotty does not have to respect. Thus, the solution for Dotty’s geopathology at the end of the play comes from her newly acquired awareness that she is superior to her husband and from the promise to go to New York, which will physically allow her to depart from the house that does not fit her identity any longer.

Moreover, this image of holes in the walls reminds of a notorious fissure in American literature, a fissure that leads to the fall of a house. It might be possible that Glaspell had in mind Edgar Alan Poe’s tale “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1839), where what begins as a little fissure in the house leads to its total collapse at the end of the tale. In the House of Usher there is a

Once barely-discernible fissure, of which I have before spoken as extending from the roof of the building, in a zigzag direction, to the base. While I gazed, this fissure rapidly widened – there came a fierce breath of the whirlwind – the entire orb of the satellite burst at once upon my sight – my brain reeled as I saw the mighty walls rushing asunder – there was a long tumultuous shouting sound like the voice of a thousand waters – and the deep and dank tarn at my feet closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the ‘House of Usher.’ (1980: 78)

While Seymore thinks that the holes in the wall can be covered by a picture, Poe’s story suggests that Seymore’s house is in peril, since these fissures represent Dotty’s need to transcend the walls and change the configuration of the house.

Beyond the physical presence of holes in the wall as a means of escaping victimage of location in the case of Dotty in *Chains of Dew*, Glaspell also employs this technique, though a bit differently, in *The Verge* and in *Close the Book*. As noted earlier, Glaspell also employs the image of crevices and fissures in *The Verge* in the tower that represents Claire’s need to be different and outside society. The “innumerable pricks and slits” of the metal lantern reflected on the wall (78), support visually Claire’s wish to throw darts through the circle of respectability she uses to refer

to society, a solution to Claire's geopathology that is insufficient.<sup>27</sup> However, a mere verbal reference to crevices is enough to solve Jhansi and Peyton's ill-placement in *Close the Book*. As seen in Chapter 5 Jhansi and Peyton's main problem with the onstage place is that this place is heavily loaded with Puritan traditions and symbols of respectability that they do not accept as part of their identity.<sup>28</sup> When the genealogy book appears onstage, at first glance it seems it is a symbol of tradition that will oppress Peyton and Jhansi even more. But it is this book which offers these characters the solution for their geopathology, and, interestingly, the solution is formulated under the metaphor of crevices:

PEYTON: Jhansi, I don't know that we need to leave society. There seems little – crevices in these walls of respectability.

JHANSI: And whenever we feel a bit stifled we can always find air through our family trees.  
(95)

Those notorious ancestors Peyton and Jhansi find in the book<sup>29</sup> are referred to as "crevices in these walls of respectability", and they will be the ones that enable Jhansi and Peyton to stay in the house, because they now know that there are also outcasts in the family. Jhansi and Peyton, who are not but comic characters, quickly abandon their idea of taking the open road and surviving on berries and nuts, for the secure place that society offers them, as long as they can find support in their "disrespectful" pasts.

On the whole, it could be said that if in the dramatic discourse of geopathology walls are frequently used to constrain characters in spatial terms, indicative of many other entrapments, such as society, traditional roles, family, death, and so on, as seen throughout this thesis, it seems sensible that Glaspell offers the rupture of these very walls as a principle of departure. Glaspell employs holes, crevices, pricks and slits, physical or metaphorically, to evince the geopathic characters' need to see what is beyond the blocking walls and to let the air run through the walls of the houses that imprison them. These little fractures are little attempts to escape geopathology.

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<sup>27</sup> This issue has been analysed in Chapter 4.2.2, pp. 171- 172.

<sup>28</sup> See Chapter 5.1, pp. 199- 200.

<sup>29</sup> The notorious ancestors Jhansi and Peyton find in the book have been detailed in Chapter 5.1, p. 202.

## 7.5 Departure through Art

Art is another means that Glaspell uses to relieve her characters from oppressing houses. Several scholars have focused on the role of the woman artist in Glaspell's works, though their focus has been mainly *Trifles* and *The Verge*.<sup>30</sup> For instance, Veronica Makowsky has pointed out that Minnie in *Trifles* is representative of the female modernist artist and that her erratic stitches are but her new art form.<sup>31</sup> Brenda Murphy takes this point a bit further claiming that men's rejection of women's art, symbolised in the men's laugh at Minnie's quilt and in Minnie's dropping off from the choir, is even the reason behind John's murder: "Glaspell suggests that if the potential for creativity and appreciation of beauty is chilled and stifled enough, the force that seeks life may turn to rage, and women will revolt against their obstacle, killing off their immediate oppressors, the patriarchal authority figures in their lives" (2005: 87). Similarly, in *The Verge* "Through Claire Archer, the protagonist, Glaspell explores the causes and the tragic consequences of the high modernist's alienation from the life around her" (Makowsky 1999: 62). Claire is the "female modernist [...] trying to break through boundaries of artistic and social conventions" (Duneer 2006: 45), a character "trying to become a Nietzschean woman-artist, superior to the ordinary person" (Waterman 1979: 19). While I agree with these scholars, my analysis goes deeper into the relevance of art in terms of the spatial determinism the female protagonists suffer from in Glaspell's plays, focusing more extensively on *Chains of Dew* and *Alison's House*.

Mother's dolls in *Chains of Dew* constitute an important attempt in Glaspell's plays to show art as a medium to express oneself and escape the reality of the place where a character lives. Some critics have seen a connection between *Chains of Dew* and Ibsen's *A Doll's House*,<sup>32</sup> though the point has never been taken very far. As Ben-

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<sup>30</sup> Karen Hollingsworth Gardiner's unpublished Ph. D Thesis focuses on this topic. The MLA abstract includes Gardiner's ideas that "the artistic female characters who people [Glaspell's] works chafe against the limiting domestic domain they are expected to inhabit," and that Glaspell "desires the reinvention of the world of art into a more expansive and inclusive place, a place that allows women artists that freedom they need to shape wide open spaces to fit their own individual requirements as artists and as women. In all her works, Glaspell imagines this place and seeks to write it into existence, an idealistic goal she was able to achieve only in her fictions" (MLA abstracts, "Making Room for Creative Women: Female Artists in the Works of Susan Glaspell." Karen Hollingsworth Gardiner. University of Alabama (1996)).

<sup>31</sup> See Makowsky 1999: 53.

<sup>32</sup> See for instance Noe 1983: 129, and Gainor 2001: 188.



Zvi has pointed out, Ibsen's Nora had become "a very popular figure in 1915 Greenwich Village circles" (2005: 158). The most evident link between both plays is that one of the characters in Glaspell's play is called Nora. Beyond the obviously intended coincidence in names, and more importantly, the relationship between Glaspell and Ibsen is that in *Chains of Dew* Glaspell reworks Ibsen's metaphor of dolls. In *A Doll's House*, Nora is considered a doll trapped within the obligations her home puts on her, understanding home as her husband's domain. Glaspell, however, does not only use the doll's house as a metaphor for the creation and solidification of women's identity as their husbands' dolls, but male characters also respond to a similar pattern. As I will show, Seymore is a very obvious doll figure, a token to play with. Moreover, the physical dolls that appear in *Chains of Dew* stand for art, a kind of art the male characters in the play cannot understand. Glaspell highlights the importance of these dolls since when Act II opens in the library room, among the usual props that can be found in this location, one is surprised, however, to see three dolls. There are "*two dolls – twins. They are not the usual dolls; they are dolls that say things about people,*" and "*Another doll – only half stuffed*" (37). As observed in Chapter 5,<sup>33</sup> Seymore thinks that making dolls is his mother's means to pass the time during the last days of her life, and to do something for others, as these dolls are to be sold at the Church Bazaar: "They say it all [...] She makes them for the church, you know. They sell them at the bazaar. All the children are crazy about them. You see, mother just has to go on doing things for people – she's got the habit" (II, 2, 7). But Mother employs these dolls to express her anger at the dull people around her. Indeed, there is an uncanny truth in these dolls:

NORA: There is something devilish about these dolls.

MOTHER: (*Taking up Amelia*) The women of Bluff City – (*Looking at Amelia – then Nora*) If they had any idea how funny they are – then it wouldn't be the kind of funniness you have to do something about. But after you've lived with respectability for seventy years it helps to make a stiff neck and a smile that doesn't know how silly the neck is. These dolls have kept me out of lots of trouble. Tell me (*taking up the uncompleted doll*) do you think this doll looks at all like Seymore? (II, 2, 12)

Mother explains what she feels about people through her dolls, avoiding being directly rude to her neighbours. The changes the twin dolls experience throughout the play parallel the changes in characters' identities.

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<sup>33</sup> See pp. 220- 221.

One of the dolls, appropriately called Angelica, stands for the dutiful Dotty. Physically, they both have long hair, knotted at the back. It could be argued that Dotty's identity, like anybody's, can be modelled as a doll. For Glaspell makes use of the dolls to show that men's identities are as mouldable as dolls' and women's, indeed. Mother has recreated Seymore in the half-stuffed doll, and Glaspell employs this doll to reflect what happens to Seymore. As with the other dolls, Seymore does not realise that this doll stands for him, and instead he refers to it, "Now look at that happy doll mother is making" (III, 28). It is not only that Mother is not making a "happy" doll, but the truth is also that she is not making it, but emptying it. That the doll is only half-stuffed at this point highlights the complexity of Seymore's character. He has a divided identity. He is trapped between being a poet longing for freedom and his self-imposed burdens as a family and society man. His mother is very rough with the doll, as rough as she would like to be with her son. Towards the end of the play, Mother is mending the doll that looks like Seymore, but suddenly she "*gives an exasperated sit up to the doll*" (III, 26), "*rips the doll's head and begins to let the sawdust out*" (III, 27). She empties the doll's head because she realises that her son is collapsing in the face of the latter events. Nora interrupts her:

NORA: (*Noting the somewhat depleted head*) Are you unmaking Seymore?

MOTHER: I mustn't – unmake Seymore. It really couldn't be done. He'd become – (*pours out the rest of the sawdust, holds up the rag that was once a head*) Would you like to see him – like that?

NORA: Not permanently.

MOTHER: Then you'd better go away.

NORA: I make him like that? – (*Pointing to the rag*)  
(*Seymore's mother nods*) (III, 28- 29)

Seymore, as the doll, is being reduced to a rag, dispossessed of his role as the martyr of the family. For his wife and mother are no longer the weak women he has to protect. Moreover, his wife endeavours to free Seymore from the social obligations that, according to himself, prevented him from writing. His mother uses the rag, flapping it repeatedly in the final act (III, 35- 37), to convince Dotty that for the love she has for her husband, she must sacrifice herself and go back to her old role, or at least pretend she goes back. This sudden turn at the end of the play has granted Glaspell the label "traditional." However, the play ends with some images contrary to this view, besides

the holes in the wall discussed previously. When Mother “*energetically re-stuffs the head [of the Seymore doll]*” (III, 40), Glaspell shows that, eventually, Seymore is the only doll character. Mother and Dotty are the ones that take care of him and know how to control him, and not the other way around, as he believes. Mother’s art safely saves her from ill-placement as it goes unnoticed by the male characters in the play and it is through the dolls that Dotty and Mother come into an agreement regarding what to do with Seymore: re-stuffing him, making him believe that they need him in order to survive.

In *Alison’s House* art is also what saves Alison from her imprisonment during her lifetime and what will release her forever, as well as other members of her family. Given that Alison talked about her imprisonment, her geopathology, in her poems, the final solution for Alison’s entrapment appears then through publishing these secret poems, making her words as free as she would have loved to be. In this concern it is interesting to compare Alison Stanhope with Seymore Standish, because out of this comparison Glaspell’s main denouncement against gender politics arises. Like Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One’s Own*, in her story about Judith Shakespeare, Glaspell criticises gender politics regarding female artists and the place they have in literature. It is not a matter of coincidence that Seymore’s and Alison’s surnames are similar, Standish and Standhope. A symbolic reading of their surnames reveals that Seymore Standish “stands for dish,” that is for the material things that keep him tied to society and his obligations. He is a banker and a family man. Seymore is also the male writer who could “say more,” but who does not, due to his imaginary self-imposed burden, or maybe simply because he is a bad writer. A symbolic reading of Alison’s surname reveals that she “stands for hope.” She is more interested in spiritual things and the hope that one day women writers will enjoy the freedom she could not. Seymore and Alison are both poets. But Seymore lives a life of privilege based on his gender. Only two poems of his are read in the play and they are not very good, but in spite of his mediocrity, Seymore’s work is published and well-known. On the other hand, Alison, who is indeed a great poetess, lives a life of reclusion and her poems are not published while she is alive.

The publishing of Alison’s poems is not only important for her merit as a writer, but also because these poems would make her free. As Gardiner says, “Alison remained

chained and walled, but beyond the story her words may finally break the chains of affection and slip the walls as she was never able to do” (2006: 196). The publication of these poems, importantly, would also liberate Eben, Stanhope and Elsa forever, since they would accept that what society thinks of Alison and her family does not matter to them. That is, they would acknowledge that the geopathic conditions of society circles cannot trap them any longer. Indeed, I would say that what really matters here is the liberation of the present characters, since what Alison really wanted regarding her poems cannot be ascertained. I agree with Hinz-Bode’s wondering: “Might the protection of her privacy, then, of her decision to respect the social institution of marriage along with another woman’s feelings, not have been what Alison Stanhope truly wanted?” (2006b: 190). The final moments in the last act become a dialectical and physical struggle to assure to whom the poems belong and what to do with them:

EBEN: They are for the world. (689)

ANN: Won’t you let Alison’s words pass on – as a gift to all love – let them *be* here – when you are not here? (690, author’s emphasis)

Karen Laughlin has extensively and brilliantly debated over what Glaspell’s point on the legitimacy to publish poems of a deceased author could be:

In Glaspell’s exploration of privacy in *Alison’s House* we see this restructuring at work. Knowles’s characterization as a reporter indicates journalism’s role in breaking down the barriers between private and public life. And the very fact that act 3 centers on the *debate* over whether the family should make the newly discovered (and highly revealing) love poems available for publication, on the one hand, demonstrates Glaspell’s acceptance of the family’s right to privacy. On the other hand, in the passionate arguments of Eben, Elsa, Ann, and Knowles in favor of publication, Glaspell suggests that it is the family’s social responsibility to relinquish that right. (1995: 224, author’s emphasis)

I also agree with Laughlin’s final comment, “I do not think Glaspell’s answer to this question is quite so simple. And I would argue that it is the fact of asking this question, or, more precisely, the *process* of answering it, that gives this play its interest” (1995: 224, author’s emphasis).

While as seen in the quotation above, Eben and Ann agree that Alison's poems belong to the world, no matter what they reveal about her, overcoming what society could think of the family is not trouble-free for Stanhope. As Laughlin believes, "What Stanhope seeks to protect is not Alison's personal privacy or even her choice to avoid public recognition of her poetic gift but, rather, the family name – in other words, the family's social standing and, by implication, the property to which social standing is attached" (1995: 227). During the final moments of the play Stanhope keeps on "*put[ting] on more wood*" in the fireplace (690- 691), ready to burn the poems and keep the family secret, resembling Agatha's unfulfilled enterprise. But later Stanhope is convinced that these poems do not belong to him, so it is not up to him to decide what to do with them. Though it is Elsa who eventually keeps the poems, since "Alison said it – for women" (690), the characters agree that Alison said it for them all, for all the characters that feel as trapped as she felt in one way or another. The characters argue:

ELSA: I feel Alison wrote those poems for me.

STANHOPE: I feel she wrote them for me.

ELSA: And there will be those in the future to say, She wrote them for me.

STANHOPE: I feel – something right, something that all the time had to be, in you and me, here alone in her room, giving back to her century what she felt and did not say.

ELSA: But she did say. (691)

Blocking the way of her father towards the fire with her own body, Elsa also reproduces with the movement of her body the same images that inspired Alison. As seen with many other female characters in Glaspell's dramaturgy, final understanding comes when a woman uses her body as landscape to explain what cannot be said with words: "The birds that sang thirty years ago. (*Her hands go out, as birds*). The flower that bent in the wind. (*She bends, as in the wind*)" (691). The image of freedom incarnated in the bird, as in *Trifles*, and the images of nature so recurrent in Glaspell's plays return here again to remind Stanhope of the liberty Alison did not enjoy and which they could provide her with through making her poems "depart." As the clock strikes twelve, Stanhope says: "It isn't – what you said. Or even, what Ann said. But her. It goes. It is going. It is gone. She loved to make her little gifts. If she can make one more, from her century to yours, then she isn't gone. Anything else is – too lonely. (*He holds the poems out to her.*) For Elsa – From Alison" (691). In the final moment, Stanhope realises he has to let the truth be known about Alison, to make her be remembered as she was.

Glaspell also shows the idea that Alison must metaphorically come back to life by Elsa's proxemic approach to the clock, which had been stopped since Alison's death, symbolising paralysis. Elsa winds the clock symbolising Alison's renewed connection to life. As the play ends and the characters seem to come to an agreement on letting Alison be presented as she really was and felt, the clock tells the hour. Making use of a little obvious device, the clock strikes the beginning of the new century as the play ends. It is the beginning of a new century, but also the beginning of a new life for the Stanhopes as well as Alison's release. Symbolised in the release of her poems from the house, Alison also gets away from the house. Similarly, her family also escapes geopathology as they sell the estate, physically leaving the house, and accepting and effecting Alison's release. The final movement that all the characters in this play will make locates them outside the walls of the house, the oppression the concept of their family had constituted for them, and outside the rules of society.

## 7.6 Departure through Nature

In straight conjunction with the image Elsa creates at the end of *Alison's House*, with her body moving as a flower at the mercy of the wind, there stands another of Glaspell's favourite fields through which she reconciles her characters with space: characters' experimentation with nature. It seems that experimentation with nature was an image that marvelled Susan Glaspell, an image she did not have to go far to work on. Glaspell's own grandfather, Silas Glaspell, experimented quite successfully with plants, the reason why many critics have seen in Glaspell's ancestor a possible model for both Ira Morton in *Inheritors* and Claire in *The Verge*.<sup>34</sup> Glaspell's husband was also interested in experimenting with nature. Cook himself had his greenhouse to work with plants, as Claire does in *The Verge*.<sup>35</sup> His enthusiasm for greenhouses even became the genesis of one of Cook's poems, "Georgic," where the voice is a personified greenhouse.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, nature has always enjoyed a primary role in American

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<sup>34</sup> See for instance Ozieblo 2000: 9- 10.

<sup>35</sup> See Ben-Zvi 2005: 65.

<sup>36</sup> See Cook 1925: 66- 71.

literature.<sup>37</sup> Concretely, the Transcendentalist writers Glaspell admired so much, such as Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman, wrote extensively about nature. Thus, a brief revision of the goodness these Transcendentalist writers found in the American landscape proves useful for the present analysis of the dramatic solution to geopathology through nature in Glaspell's plays.

In general terms, it could be said that for Transcendentalist writers the American landscape offered a unique possibility for the complete union between nature and soul. As some scholars have highlighted, one of the most important influences on Glaspell's work and life was her devotion to Monism, a stream of thought that in America would find its source in American Transcendentalism.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, the Davenport Monist Society brought together Floyd Dell, George Cram Cook and Susan Glaspell in the early 1910s.<sup>39</sup> Popularised by the work of the German philosopher Ernest Haeckel, Monism “drew together energy and matter, life and nonlife, man and animals into a great, mysterious unity. Man, the earth, the sun were surely mortal, but to Haeckel the great sum of things was not; worlds would go on indefinitely dying and being born” (May qtd. in Murphy 2005: 28). In the words of George Cram Cook, “this earthly life has risen from soil to plant, from plant to animal, from water to air, from unconsciousness to consciousness, from mindlessness to mind, and from mind – whither” (qtd. in Glaspell 1926: 151). In *The People* Glaspell offers her own vision of monist philosophy, displaying an outstanding imagery derived from the American landscape. This excerpt deserves being quoted in full:

We are living now. We shall not be living long. No one can tell us we shall live again. This is our little while. This is our chance. And we take it like a child who comes from a dark room to which he must return – comes from one sunny afternoon to a lovely hillside, and finding a hole, crawls in there till after the sun is set. I want the child to know the sun is shining upon flowers in the grass. I want him to know before he has to go back to the room that is dark. I wish I had pipes to call him to the hilltop of beautiful distances. I myself could see farther if he were seeing at all. Perhaps I can tell *you*: you who have dreamed and dreaming know, and knowing care. Move!

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<sup>37</sup> “The ideological use of the landscape” in American drama (Chaudhuri 2000: 24) has been discussed in Chapter 2, see pp. 45- 46.

<sup>38</sup> See for instance Ben-Zvi 2005: 82- 83, Hinz-Bode 2006c: 93, Makowsky 1993: 4, and Papke 2006b: 25- 28.

<sup>39</sup> For an account of how Dell, Cook and Glaspell got together in the Monist Society see Dell 1969: 31, 170.

Move from the things that hold you. If you move others will move. Come! Now. Before the sun goes down. (49, author's emphasis)

This monist possibility of the conjunction of nature and soul appears interesting for the present study on geopathology, since the American landscape thus offers a possibility for the soul of a trapped geopathic character to join the open and lively nature outside the walls of their houses.

Though, as we have seen, experimentation with plants did not help Claire to overcome her sense of ill-placement, this would help many of the heroines in Glaspell's fiction. Katie in *The Visioning* is described "like the new gardener eager to see whether he can redeem the mistakes of the old. And the new gardener's zeal is not all for the flower; some of it is to show what he can do, and much of it the true gardener's passion for experiment. Katie Jones would have made a good gardener" (1911: 15). As with Claire, Katie is not presented as a mere gardener, but as an experimenter with forms. Similarly, Blossom's early appearance in *Ambrose Holt and Family* also presents her experimenting with flowers: "Here and there she had done things like that – as experiment, just for fun, to see what would happen. Only here and there, for she knew the massing was right, so her garden was not unlike the work of a social experimenter who goes a little way but stays safe in the main body" (1931: 6). Moreover, for Blossom, her flowers constitute a form of art. As she arranges them in a vase, "Surveying it with pleasure she considered that this was perhaps like the pleasure people had who could really do things, could paint, or write – combining, putting things together so they were nice in themselves, and also had a meaning" (1931: 9). And this meaning that comes from putting together different flowers in a vase is what Madeline does to some extent in *Inheritors*, and applied to her sense of identity and conception of space.

As already argued, in *Inheritors* there is a strong link between identity and land, in the sense that there is a powerful link between the material place characters possess and their heritage.<sup>40</sup> Silas solved his problem with place by sharing the hill, and thus through nature. But for his son Ira the remaining land belonging to the family has given way to his geopathic condition. He has been presented as a character totally obsessed

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<sup>40</sup> See Chapter 5.1, pp. 203- 209.



with the land, symbolised in his experimentation with corn. Towards the end of the play, Madeline claims:

MADELINE: The world is all a – moving field (*her hands move, voice too is of a moving field*)

Nothing is to itself. If America thinks so – America is like father. I don't feel alone anymore. The wind has come through – wind rich from lives now gone. Grandfather Fejevary, gift from a field far off. Silas Morton. No, not alone any more. [...] yes, I'm leaving grandfather's college – then maybe I can one day lie under the same sod with him, and not be ashamed. Though I must tell you (*a little laugh*) under the sod is my idea of no place to be. I want to be a long time – where the wind blows.

AUNT ISABEL: (*who is trying not to cry*) I'm afraid it won't blow in prison, dear.

MADELINE: I don't know. Might be the only place it would blow. (156)

Madeline appropriates the image of his father's experimentation with corn to talk about the whole world. While for her father the wind was a negative element which robbed him of his seeds to share them with his neighbours, Madeline sees in the wind not only a positive thing, but the main ingredient in the world she dreams. Her own hands and voice are described in terms of movement. The wind does not respect human barriers, nor walls, or houses. The wind is free. According to Madeline the whole world should be an open field.

It must be noted that Glaspell modelled Madeline on a short story she wrote in 1919 entitled "Pollen." In "Pollen," the protagonist is called Ira Mead, and as Ira Morton in *Inheritors*, at the beginning he is a greedy character who does not want to share his experimental and fruitful corn with his immigrant neighbours. Unable to fight the wind, he realises that "When you fight things larger than you you only know that you are small" (1919: 450). He then acknowledges the good that the mixture of his corn with the corns of others brings, and extrapolates the image of the corn to nations: "The corn ... men ... nations ... And he couldn't help this. It was that released him as wind releases life other life" (1919: 450- 451). He gives his seeds to his neighbours and explains to them how to use them. He realises the power and benefits of cross—pollination regarding both corn and all nationalities inhabiting America. Unlike Ira Meads, Ira Morton does not reach this maturity, and Glaspell does not provide Ira with a release of the burden of his past in *Inheritors*. His daughter Madeline, however, as Ira

Meads in "Pollen," sees the goodness in the wind and in the mixture of people. Madeline leaves the farm and the college, "that runt on the hill" (156), because, contrary to the other characters in the play who claim they are inheritors of the pioneer past, these places are not the pioneers' places any longer, as they have been vitiated by modern values such as capitalism, xenophobia, and submission to political power.

In visual terms, it is significant that the image Madeline appropriates from her father had been used first by her grandfather Silas, with the same positive meaning as Madeline uses it afterwards. Silas muses, "Ain't it queer how things blow from mind to mind – like seeds. Lord A'mighty – you don't know where they'll take hold" (115). Grandmother Morton also contributed to this image of seeds in Act I. It is not a coincidence that she gave the Native Americans cookies "with seeds" (110) and that she provided Delia Fejevary with her best "purple pansy seeds" (112). In this manner, Glaspell gives to the image of seeds both a physical and a symbolic meaning. Physically they are used to unite the WASP Mortons with Native Americans and with the Hungarian immigrants. Symbolically, as the seeds are conjoined by the wind, Glaspell configures space as a cross-pollinating field. At the end of the play Madeline decides to go to court with Emil Johnson, the Swede neighbour, and accepts imprisonment, a penalty she could avoid, given her uncle's high-status connections. But she feels that she is doing right and that she is not alone. It could be argued that with her departure, she wants to prove, or at least attempts to demonstrate, that the sense of ill-placement could be solved by tolerant citizens who accept people from different countries, races, classes, and genders.

Through Madeline, Glaspell is reworking the American foundational myth of America as a Melting Pot where its superb nature grants space for everybody. From the early writings of Crèvecoeur, those who came to America were seen as plants which become enriched when in contact with the American soil: "in Europe they were as so many useless plants, wanting vegetative mould and refreshing showers; they withered, and were mowed down by want, hunger and war; but now, by the power of transplantation, like all other plants they have taken root and flourished!" (1981: 69). However, while Glaspell could like Crèvecoeur's idea about the possibilities of the American land and the ecological metaphor, she could not agree with the sense of rootedness and fixity implied in the quotation above. Precisely, as argued in Chapter

5.1, roots, when they are linked to the idea of fixity, are the main targets in *Inheritors*. As Madeline says, “there must be something pretty rotten” (153) in her location, that is, roots have become putrid. Madeline does not become a plant. Something that gets fixed (as Claire’s plants), but a seed. As it could not be otherwise, the very final moment of the play describes Madeline as a free seed herself. Left alone on stage she is described,

*From the closet MADELINE takes her hat and wrap. Putting them on, she sees the tennis racket on the table. She goes to it, takes it up, holds it a moment, then takes it to the closet, puts it carefully away, closes the door behind it. A moment she stands there in the room, as if listening to something. Then she leaves that house. (157)*

This superb ending symbolises Madeline’s victory over her geopathology. First of all, Glaspell makes Madeline take into her hands the symbol of her bourgeois class, her tennis racket. A symbol she puts into the closet. But moreover, the tennis racket reminds us also of Madeline’s violence, since she used it twice to hit the police. That Madeline leaves it at the farm also suggests visually that she is for peace, joining Silas and Fejevary the First in their anti-war and anti-violence positions. Finally, the wind gains leading importance in the play as Madeline acutely listens to it, making the audience fully aware of its significance. It could be said that as Madeline leaves the house, she does it as if carried or enchanted by the wind she is listening to. She wants to be a seed in the cross-pollinating field even if that field is a prison. She becomes her father’s corn: “It gives itself away all the time – the best corn gift to other corn. What you are – that doesn’t stay with you. Then – (*not with assurance, but feeling her way*) be the most you can be, so life will be more because you were” (156). Therefore, she decides to “throw [herself] to the winds” (156), giving the wind “something to carry”<sup>41</sup> (155). As seen in this principle of departure, with her throwing herself to the winds, Madeline shows that identity is movable and cannot be walled in.

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<sup>41</sup> It is interesting to note that for Glaspell the image of the yellow corn had such a symbolic aura that it was Ann Harding’s blonde hair that earned her the role as Madeline. As Edna Kenton recalls, “Susan wanted the ‘just right’ actress for Madeline in this play of yellow corn and yellow pollen and revolutionary spirit gone ‘yellow.’ One after another had read the part ... One morning, while casting was still going on, a pretty young thing came into the playhouse and asked for a part. Jasper Deeter, directing the play, gave her a glance and said, ‘She might do for one of the giggling girls.’ But Ida [Rauh], catching a glimpse of something corn-yellow about an ear, said, ‘Take off your hat.’ When the swirl of pale gold hair appeared, Susan called to her, had her read, and in a few minutes Ann Harding had her first part. Her stage career had begun” (1997: 135- 136).

In *The Outside* Glaspell also makes use of nature to offer the solution to her characters' victimage of location. As Brenda Murphy affirms, in *The Outside* Glaspell constructs an "extraordinary modernist text [...] carried out completely within William Carlos Williams's dictum, 'No ideas but in things.' Through [nature] imagery alone, the two women carry on a debate over the efficacy of the force of life in opposition to the force of death" (2005: 166). Mrs. Patrick and Allie had re-affirmed and projected on the outside landscape their wish to be buried in life.<sup>42</sup> But it is this same landscape that will bring them back to life. Some critics have seen in the male characters the dramatic element that makes the female characters come back to life. "[T]he appearance of life-savers acts as a catalyst," says C. W. E. Bigsby (1983: 27), and according to Hinz-Bode, "Allie's decision to follow the Captain's example and fight for life against all odds is drawn out to full awareness precisely when one of the men confronts her straight out with the question why she would want to work for a woman who apparently '[wants] folks to die'" (2006b: 90). However, I believe that it is the women alone who come back to life by themselves, and above all, due to Allie's effort and her reading of the *Outside*. Interestingly, in the setting there was already a clue that, independently from the appearance of the male characters, bore a seed of hope in spatial terms. The stage direction reads, "*at the ceiling is seen a part of the frame work from which the boat once swung*" (48). This framework is the reminiscence that in this place once people were saved, a symbolic foreshadowing of Allie's saving Mrs. Patrick at the end of the play. As far as the relevance of the male characters is concerned here, it is also important to note that in the short story version "A Rose in the Sand," Glaspell does not require any male character to save the women.

Allie is the first of the two female characters to read the *Outside* in a different and positive way. It is interesting to note that while Allie has been described as "part of the sand" (50), in her one can also suspect "*the peculiar intensity of twisted things which grow in unfavoring places*" (50). Allie is like a leaf of grass, a clear Whitmanesque reference, which is not only buried, because, it significantly also "grows." Instead of just seeing the physical and symbolic burial of the grass at the mercy of the sand, Allie, a leaf of grass herself, emphasises the struggle that takes place,

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<sup>42</sup> See Chapter 6.1, pp. 242- 245 for my analysis of the imagery of death in *The Outside*.

that “*They* fight too. The woods!” (53, author’s emphasis). Glaspell makes explicit the different readings of this landscape in the following dialogue:

ALLIE: They fight for the life the way that Captain fought for the life in there! (*pointing to the closed door*)

MRS PATRICK: (*with a strange exultation*) And lose.

ALLIE: (*sure, sombre*) They don’t lose.

MRS PATRICK: Don’t lose? (*triumphant*) I have walked on the tops of buried trees!

ALLIE: (*slow, sombre, yet large*) And vines will grow over the sand that covers the trees, and hold it. And other trees will grow over the buried trees.

MRS PATRICK: I’ve watched the sand slip down on the vines that reach out farthest.

ALLIE: Another vine will reach that spot. (*under her breath, tenderly*) Strange little things that reach out farthest!

MRS PATRICK: And will be buried soonest!

ALLIE: And hold the sand for things behind them. They save a wood that guards a town.

MRS PATRICK: I care nothing about a wood to guard a town. This is the outside – these dunes where only beach grass grows, this outer shore where men can’t live. The Outside. (53)

The opposed ways these female characters read the same landscape correspond to two different positions in life. Allie stands for seeing the positive tiny things that struggle to go on, fighters arising stronger from difficulties, because what she finds primordial is the life that there is in the struggle. Glaspell also uses this image in *Prodigal Giver* (*Judd Rankin’s Daughter*), a novel also set on Cape Cod, where Frances muses about “the wonder of it was things should be growing at all,” about “these bushy little things growing off here by themselves, in the sand, right up against the Outside, far from the protection of the rest of the land” (1946: 112). But unlike Frances and Allie Mayo, Mrs. Patrick stands for the derelict side, the side of those who abandon the battle before it starts because victory seems unreachable, the side of those who cannot see the wonder of the stiff grass trying to grow.

Unable to make Mrs. Patrick share her vision of the struggle in life, Allie Mayo adopts a new tactic. She becomes physically the Outside, a part of the landscape. She “*slowly raises her arm, bends it to make the form of the Cape. Touches the outside of her bent arm*”, and says: “The Outside. But an arm that bends to make a harbor – where men are safe” (53). Glaspell identifies Allie with the clearest image of life in the dunes, namely, the harbour where sailors come back safely to. Interestingly, in terms of the terminology related to dramatic geopathology employed in this thesis, McBride asserts

that “using her own body to make her point, [Allie] creates a *place of shelter* against the Outside” (2006: 169, emphasis mine). Allie attempts to liberate Mrs. Patrick from the prison of dead images she sees on the Outside, offering instead this other image of shelter she finds on the Outside too. Once again, Mrs Patrick reads this image as a symbol of failure. She says to Allie: “You’re like this Cape. A line of land way out to sea – land not life” (54), to what Allie responds “A harbor far at sea. (*raises her arm, curves it in as if around something she loves*) Land that encloses and gives shelter from storm” (54). Besides metaphorically metamorphosing into the landscape, Allie’s body constitutes a powerful image in another regard. As her movement forms an embrace of love, Allie offers Mrs. Patrick the point of support the abandoned woman needs: the female connection, the reconciliation with the community Mrs. Patrick had rejected. Women’s coalition, which works so obviously in *Trifles*, *Chains of Dew* and *Bernice*, is also a means of negotiating the power of place in *The Outside*. As argued in the case of Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters, Mrs. Patrick and Allie’s case, as Dotty and Mother’s in *Chains of Dew*, and Abbie and Margaret’s in *Bernice*, these female characters do not ally because “they like it,” but as a form of survival in a hostile environment. Women’s coalition, and not simply sisterhood, is offered thus as a first step towards escaping from geopathology.

Moreover, in the case of *The Outside* it is remarkable that in contrast to the image of death and failure, as the men can be seen taking the corpse of the drowned sailor out of the station at the end of the play, Allie erects herself a real life-saver. While the men were grouped together to fulfil a goal, Allie and Mrs. Patrick will in the end become allied with promising success. These male characters, and their unsuccessful attempt to resuscitate the drowned sailor, constitute one of the most powerful images in *The Outside*. In contrast with this, Allie, who was seen first as a passive and beaten character, achieves what the men cannot, that is to say, to bring, at least metaphorically, someone back to life. The play ends with a “symbolic resurrection,” as J. Ellen Gainor rightly claims (2001: 78). Allie is a heroine. It is thanks to her that the old life-saving station takes back its former quality. The play ends with Mrs. Patrick’s repetition of the phrase “Meeting the Outside!”:

MRS PATRICK: (*bitter, exultant*) savers of life! (*to ALLIE MAYO*) You savers of life! ‘Meeting the Outside!’ Meeting – (*but she cannot say it mockingly again; in saying it, something of*

*what it means has broken through, rises. Herself lost, feeling her way into the wonder of life) Meeting the Outside!*

*(It grows in her as CURTAIN lowers slowly). (55)*

Though she firstly utters it in a mocking way, she finally utters it conscious of its meaning, accepting the dare of meeting the outside and embracing “the wonder of life” (55). Besides saving herself, Allie Mayo helps Mrs. Patrick to achieve salvation too. Both women are now ready to see the landscape in a different way, to see the life that there is in the struggle. They have overcome, thus, the malignity that there was found in their location before.

It is interesting to read Allie and Mrs. Patrick’s utter change in *The Outside* in comparison to Katie at the end of *The Visioning*:

She paused and watched a gardener removing some debris that had covered a flower bed. It was spring, and there were shoots and this gardener was wise and tender in taking the old thing away, that the new shoots might have air. Katie could see them there – the tender green of them, as he lifted the old things away that the growing things might come through. The gardener did not seem to feel he was cruel in taking the dead things away. As a good gardener, he would scout the idea of its being unkind to take them away just because they had been there so long. What did that matter, the wise gardener would scornfully demand, when there were growing things underneath pushing their way to the light?

And if he were given to philosophising he might say that the kindest thing even to the dead things was to let the new things come through. Thus life would be kept, and all the life that had ever been upon the earth perpetuated, vindicated, glorified.

It seemed to Katie that what life needed was a saner gardener. Not a gardener who would smother new shoots with a lot of dead things telling how shoots should go. (1911: 452-453)

Allie and Mrs. Patrick conjoin Katie, and many others of Glaspell’s female characters such as Madeline, in their new task as “saner gardeners.” They see life after death. They put away dead things to leave place for living ones. And this is a clear connection to another of Glaspell’s means of overcoming geopathology: the negotiation between old forms; the past and tradition, and experimental new forms; the present, so that the past never kills the present or tells the present how to “grow,” as the final section of this thesis discusses.

### 7.7 Departure through Solving the Generation Conflict

In Chapter 5 I discussed Glaspell's contribution to a common preoccupation in the heart of American theatre, "the animosity between generations" (Chaudhuri 2000: 110). As Chaudhuri points out, "family as pathology" is a burden highly difficult to overcome in realistic drama (2000: 110). In some of her plays, Glaspell, however, solves this animosity between generations, turning the resolution to this conflict into a dramatic device to soften the negative conditions of place, making it more hospitable. As an early critic said comparing Glaspell's *Inheritors* to Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, one aim that both playwrights endeavour to achieve is to "investigat[e] the ordinary, homely phases of life in their respective countries" ("Tchehov and Susan Glaspell" 1929: np). That is, Glaspell, as Chekhov, investigates the different generations, with "a tremendous hope in the generations to come. No matter how pessimistic to day [*sic*] may appear, the vision for the future seems to become ever more distinct. They both believe that the suffering of those living in the present will be the happiness of the future" ("Tchehov and Susan Glaspell" 1929: np). In terms of the present study about geopathology, and its possible solutions as principles of departure, it could be said that those negotiations between generations can be dramatically used to either turn place into a peaceful one, once the conflict is solved, or to eventually force the geopathic character to leave her/his location.

As argued earlier, in *Alison's House*, the agreement on setting Alison free by publishing her poems passes through the understanding among the members of the Stanhope family and their own solution to the generational conflict. Glaspell materialises this solution proxemically, when at the end of the play Stanhope gives the poems to Elsa, who wants to publish them. This act also implies the reconciliation between father and daughter, as he understands that Elsa's love for Bill is right, and that she does not deserve to be as lonely as Alison was obliged to be by her family in particular and society in general. In this concern, it has been said that "while the balance of power does seem to be tipping in favor of the younger generation as the play closes, Glaspell cannot envision 'a revision of the family unit so complete that patriarchy would be unacceptable'" (Laughlin 1995: 229). Nevertheless, Laughlin does not take into account that in the final act we have learnt many things from Stanhope that disables him as a patriarch in the most traditional sense, and above all, that negotiation with younger ones is not part of the roles of a patriarch, and less with the daughter that had



disgraced the family. In this manner, Glaspell does not support patriarchy at the end of the play, but the agreement among generations that will liberate the family from their entrapment in society.

Madeline's departure has been analysed regarding the corn image and how this is an image she inherits from her ancestors too. In *Inheritors* Glaspell also suggests that the past can help to mend the present through Madeline's movements and gestures. By leaving the house, Madeline is being a right inheritor. Unable to come to terms with the members of the older and younger generations she lives with, Madeline prefers meeting symbolically her dead ancestors. I agree with Mary Papke's belief that "Madeline chooses to honor that long line of pioneers in her quest for a better world by adjuring safety and personal luxury to do battle for the disenfranchised, for those denied the freedom of self and collective expression" (2006b: 28). Moreover, this explains why Madeline instead of staying inside the farm, inside the family and society she chooses to stay outside. As Marie Molnar claims, "Her willingness, not only to speak, but to act for [the Hindu students] and suffer arrest with them signals Madeline's extension of the family (her *oikos*) beyond the walls of the home in which she grew up" (2006: 41). Glaspell reworks here the idea of the physicality of home. Home for Madeline is not the farm, where her father is trapped because of his heritage, the burden of the land; nor in the college, where her ancestors' ideas have been misappropriated. Madeline's home is outside, even if in prison, where she can be herself and defend the ideas her ancestors really had.

Furthermore, Glaspell constitutes in Madeline's evolution into a New Woman in the moments close to her departure a visual echo of the movements her ancestors performed. In the opening act, the pioneers' love and respect for nature was reflected in the way they kept the door and windows open to look through them. Madeline in Act IV acts in this way too. She "*turns and through the open door looks out at the hill, sitting where her GRANDFATHER MORTON sat when he looked out at the hill*" (143). Equally important is the fact that Madeline also repeats her pioneer ancestors' movements when she goes to the closet and takes the box to find the piece of chalk. Both the piece of chalk and Silas's deed were kept in the same box, and both props symbolise the moments when these characters enact their most important commitments. Silas's deed embodied this pioneer's will to come to terms with the Native Americans

and to do what his heart told him was right. Madeline's piece of chalk is used to draw Fred Jordan's cell on the farm floor, showing her serious commitment to her beliefs and that she is also aware that she has to do what is right. As Madeline repeats her grandfather's movements the link with a useable past is made. Glaspell makes this point more obvious as Madeline imagines her grandfather joining her in her crusade against how the farm, a microcosm of the outside world's isolation, has betrayed what it was meant to be. Madeline imagines that Silas visits Fred's cell with her:

Grandfather Morton, big and – oh, terrible. He was here. And we went to that walled-up hole in the ground – (*rising and pointing down at the chalked cell*) – where they keep Fred Jordan on bread and water because he couldn't be part of nations of men killing each other – and Silas Morton – only he was all that is back of us, tore open that cell – it was his voice tore it open – his voice cried, 'God damn you, this is America!' (*sitting down, as if rallying from a tremendous experience.*) (152)

Madeline imagines that Silas Morton would join her to defend the other unfairly imprisoned characters. Moreover, Madeline imagines Silas opening up the image of the prison, making it extensive to all America. Through what she thinks Silas would say, she articulates her thought that, as seen earlier in this thesis, America, besides its real prison buildings, has become a metaphorical prison for all those who want to keep close to the pioneers' ideals and to fight for democracy and rights. Thus, Madeline finds the support she needs in her past, since her living family cannot help her. Consequently, Madeline's grandfathers also play a role in the solution to her geopathology concerning nature. If as seen previously, Madeline sees herself as a free seed, she states that the ancestors she admires were also seeds that came with the wind. The characters in the first act were fruitful seeds: to "this land that was once Indian maize" (155), other seeds came. Silas Morton was "of the earth, as if something went from it to him" (138), "Grandfather Fejevary, [corn] gift from a field far off" (156). Through Madeline, it could be said that Glaspell proposes a return to the genuine pioneers' values to escape geopathology, but values that keep on alive and moving. As Silas said: "God damn us if we sit here rich and fat and forget man's in the makin'" (117).

In the simplistic *Close the Book* Glaspell had already revealed that the conflict of generation is not built upon a mere opposition to the immediate previous generation, and less on a simple appraisal of the present generation. As seen throughout this thesis,

neither the older nor the younger generations are to be unanimously applauded. It is interesting to show how Glaspell builds a bridge between generations which could be meaningful to solve the problem of place. Although Peyton apparently despises the immediately previous generation, for instance, his Uncle and Senator Byrd, Peyton does go back to his past when it suits him. He relates the paper on free speech Jhansi and he are writing to the Declaration of Independence, explicitly establishing a link to the past generation he likes: "I suppose that's an inherited tendency. You know, one of my ancestors signed a paper on free speech. It had a high falutin [*sic*] name: 'The Declaration of Independence'" (76). The way the play ends with Grandmother demanding to close the book is a similar image. It has been argued that Grandmother's demand is a proof of her dubious Midwestern morality, describing her as "snobbish small-town matron who hides her family's black sheep within a closed book on genealogy" (Waterman 1966: 69). Nevertheless, a negative reading of this pioneer female character would contradict the long-established privilege Glaspell grants to this kind of character. Thus, in *Close the Book*, the Grandmother's command to close the book should be understood in positive terms. She is telling future generations to stop looking into those former generations that did not behave right, as Peyton and Jhansi are doing, and to take the model of those ancestors with good values, as Madeline does in *Inheritors*. It must be noted that the original title for *Close the Book* was *Family Pride*.<sup>43</sup> Glaspell's change of title is an interesting issue, as she changed a noun phrase into an order. Taking into account what I think is Glaspell's position towards the past in this play; family pride must not be a petrified bastion to back the acts we perform in the present. There must be a rightful selection of the past one can be proud of, hence the demand to close the book. Family pride is a useful tool to make characters come to terms with the space they inhabit, as long as the pride in the past they make use of is truly worthy.

While in *Close the Book* the resolution is a demand, in *Springs Eternal* Glaspell argues onstage the power of debate, which will help both to overcome the problem with the fictional place and to attempt to end the problem with the struggle for space carried out in the war conflict offstage. Though its ending can hardly be praised from a dramatic point of view, the thematic consistency of *Springs Eternal* deserves

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<sup>43</sup> Linda Ben-Zvi says that "for some reason" the title was changed (2005: 184). I intend here to find a possible reason why Glaspell made this change.

explanation. Glaspell resolves the conflict of *Springs Eternal* with a negotiation between generations embodied in the toast that closes the play. It could be said that the character of Stewie summarises the reason why the world is inhospitable with his assertion: “We *forget* so much. Forget what we were going to be” (II, 33, author’s emphasis). The world is a mess partly because older generations failed both the heritage they had been passed down to them and the promise of a better future for their offspring. Interestingly, the toast to the “Brave Old World” at the end of the play, suggested by the younger generation, brings both generations together in their work for the future. In this concern I cannot agree with Gainor’s observation that *Springs Eternal* was rejected for production because theatre-goers “would want to look to the future” (2001: 246). Glaspell’s ending is a call to the audience to look and work for that future, but taking the past as a starting point too. As Bill and Dotty make up the toast, Harold reflects upon it:

Wait please! I’m sure it’s very nice if they were brave, but I shall put up my mind on what they felt –long gone, but alive then. (*Suddenly lighted with happy surprise*) Alive new! (*Exaltedly*) You know something? Feeling doesn’t go. It stays on – in things – in people who weren’t even born when it was born. (III, 34)

So it is not only if they were brave or not, but their ideals, their feelings and hopes also count. Feelings that have passed unnoticed from generation to generation, as the seeds blowing from mind to mind in *Inheritors*. The final reconciliation reaches its climax when Owen and Stewie ask for forgiveness for having failed the younger generation and thank them for the new opportunity to join them in saving the world from war. Owen will put his mind on a new book that will help “to fix it so there won’t be any more wars” (III, 22). Bill utters the final line in the play: “Swell! We’re off! Put your minds on the Brave Old World!” (III, 34). A clear reference to Shakespeare’s “Brave New World,” which was indeed an alternative title for *Springs Eternal*,<sup>44</sup> it seems possible that Glaspell is here again asking to take advantage of the good things of the past to work for a better future. I agree with Ben-Zvi’s idea that Glaspell’s desire to cast her eyes back must make us see her “as a conservative who wished to keep progress at bay, but as someone desiring to reconnect with an earlier time and the dynamism and values that had shaped it” (2005: 4).

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<sup>44</sup> A draft typescript with this title is held at the Berg Collection, Susan Glaspell’s Papers, in the New York Public Library.

To sum up, this chapter has argued how Susan Glaspell provides some of her ill-placed characters with several means of departure, besides the obvious device of physical departure from their oppressive locations. It can be said that in Glaspell's dramaturgy the principles of departure vary from more physical acts such as murder, redecoration and art, to more symbolic principles such as the implications of crevices, holes and fissures in the houses represented onstage, as well as nature images, the negotiation between generations and, specifically, the coalition of female characters to overcome the status of place as a problem. All these principles of departure enacted onstage come to represent the new identity Glaspell's characters have and their need to display these identities in the places they live in, even if this means brutal or subtle engagements to dismantle the fixed rules of power geometry, the constraining orders of territoriality. Moreover, these principles of departure contribute to the geopathic characters' rebellion against performativity, since their new selves also reflect in space in the performance of unexpected actions regarding such characters.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

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Art only becomes useful to man and society if it contains within it an urge to action. (Brook 1989: 235)

Having analysed dramatic geopathology in Susan Glaspell's plays; I can affirm that the experience has proved satisfying in many ways. One of the initial goals of this thesis was to analyse the consistency between Glaspell's characters and their location as a device to develop characters' identities and to set in motion the dramatic development of her plays. I can conclude that Glaspell's technique relies heavily on these relationships. The present research has discussed the different means Glaspell employs to show her characters' victimage of location. Starting from those images, themes and tropes Una Chaudhuri had proposed in *Staging Place*, not only have we seen that Glaspell's work seems to follow Chaudhuri's pattern quite closely; as for instance, in her revision of the American Myth of Mobility, the dichotomic coding of her dramatic worlds, or the image of the buried child. Furthermore, by focusing on the physical configuration of Glaspell's settings as well as on her spatial metaphors and imagery, this thesis has proved that Glaspell's plays offer a greater range of "geopathic" images and devices. With the solid background that feminist geographers, literary critics and women writers provide, this thesis has also detected and analysed other different means Glaspell uses to suggest geopathology on the part of her female characters. In this manner, the more general American Myth of Mobility that Chaudhuri proposed, has been more accurately presented regarding also the role played by women in this myth, and related to (im)mobility, we have analysed women's role in the American Dream and the Pioneer Myth, as Glaspell presents these issues. We have also seen how dichotomies such as representations of home as shelter vs. representations of home as prison; or inside vs. outside, are always changing in Glaspell's plays; suggesting the way we code the world subjectively and the fact that our identities are in continuous change. Other figures Chaudhuri proposed, such as the homecoming, the immigrant character, addictions, or family as a problem have also been discussed in this thesis, besides other figures alien to Chaudhuri's theory, such as isolation, the spatial representation of the past and images of death as origin of victimage of location. Chaudhuri's model has been left aside almost completely in the final chapter of the thesis, as her "Heroism of departure" has been modified into "Principles of departure" accounting for the many

ways Glaspell offers to her characters as a way out from their victimage of location; such as murder, art, or women's coalition.

The issues treated in this thesis lead me to reaffirm that the close relationship between Glaspell's onstage places and her characters, which Glaspell emphasises as a bidirectional relationship where place affects identity as much as the other way around, is more modernist than realist. Glaspell's fictional places are not decorative backgrounds to support a character's identity, as it happens in realistic theatre, but an entity Glaspell makes her characters engage in a verbal and kinesic dialectic. The images and theatrical devices studied in this thesis cannot but make me assert that geopathology is indeed central to Glaspell's plays. And I believe that given the complexity around the creation of dramatic geopathology, this theory can be used to assess a writer's work.

The present research has opened several lines of further research. Firstly, the concept of geopathology can also be applied to Glaspell's fiction. As suggested at different points in this thesis, Glaspell's plays, novels and short stories often treat similar topics, and victimage of location seems to be a central issue. At first sight, Glaspell's novels and short stories usually have a female protagonist trapped in a place she wants to escape from, at the same time that this female protagonist yearns for an identity of her own. For instance in "Out There" (1912) Glaspell suggests, as she does in many of her plays, that the American Dream is not made for girls. Her female protagonist suffers from victimage of location because she has to leave her beloved home town to go to work in Chicago. Trying to find a place for herself, she rejoices in the pictures of mountains she sees displayed on a window. A victim of her geopathology, and unable to fulfil her homecoming; the girl dies in front of this window. Glaspell's male protagonists in her short stories could also be analysed regarding geopathology. In this thesis I have tried to highlight those few instances in Glaspell's plays where her male characters also suffer from victimage of location. Given that in many of her short stories and novels Glaspell portrays male characters more fully than she does in her plays, there appears the opportunity to analyse her male characters' victimage of location. In "The Manager of Crystal Sulphur Springs" (1915), for instance, Bert Groves has created an imaginary world where the sanatorium his family and himself had built still exists. Glaspell depicts in Bert a character unable to



live in the reality where the Groves have lost their place and where he is a dweller in a poorhouse. Glaspell even presents euthanasia as Bert's principle of departure.

As stated in Chapter 1, two of the features that, at least theoretically, marked the difference between the Provincetown Players and other little theatres were their work system and their collaborative spirit. Thus, it would also be interesting to see if, given the work group they promoted, the plays of other women of the Provincetown Players follow the pattern of dramatic geopathology. I could say that plays such as Neith Boyce's *Winter's Night* (1916) seem to do so. In *Winter's Night*, a play which has indeed many parallels with *Trifles*, Rachel Westcott suffers from the kind of trapping atmosphere a Midwest farm can provide. Released from her imprisonment when the play opens, as her husband has died and she can move out now, Rachel must struggle against victimage of location as her brother-in-law desperately wants to marry her, insisting that Rachel stay on the farm. In this play several of the key images seen in the present research appear: isolation, coldness, death, violence, inside vs. outside, alcohol consumption, the buried child, and home as prison. Besides analysing geopathology *per se*, I also find interesting a possible analysis of the similarities and differences in the portrayal of victimage of location and principles of departure in the plays of the women of the Provincetown Players, in order to assess to what extent these women artists collaborated or inspired one another. Similarly, a comparison could be established among Glaspell's plays and her female counterparts' with the works of their male colleagues of the Provincetown Players. This contrast could also be enlightening. As also seen at some points in this thesis, some of Eugene O'Neill's plays fit the pattern of dramatic geopathology, and some of the devices Glaspell employs to create dramatic geopathology are also present in O'Neill's plays. I am quite convinced that other men of the Provincetown Players also employed similar devices and themes.

The method of analysis and the findings of this thesis can also be applied to more contemporary playwrights. According to Helen Krich Chinoy, Susan Glaspell, among other women dramatists, is the settler of the "subjects and the structures now widely used by today's women playwrights" (1987: 131). In the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, as much as at the time Glaspell wrote her plays, we still worry about having a room of one's own, a room where our identity can be projected and supported. Theatre, as a mirror of the problems society faces, still offers its stage to make the audience think

about this issue, urging us to take action. It would be interesting to see if the key factors leading to victimage of location analysed in this thesis also appear, and in which way, in the works of playwrights such as Maria Irene Fornes, Suzan-Lori Parks, Paula Vogel, or Marcia Norman. For instance, in Norman's *Night, Mother* (1983) dramatic geopathology applies in the representation of the house as prison for a woman who considers herself an unsuccessful mother and wife, in the depiction of the broken family, in the generation conflict between mother and daughter, in addictions and in the imagery of death. This kind of analysis of dramatic geopathology, comparing Glaspell's work with more contemporary plays, would reveal whether Elaine Showalter's claim that there is "an imaginary continuum, the recurrence of certain patterns, themes, problems, and images from generation to generation" (1977: 12) is true or not regarding contemporary North American women playwrights.

The method of analysis provided in this thesis can also be useful for analysing dramatic geopathology in the works of non- North American playwrights. There is one thing Glaspell did not respect wholly regarding the manifesto of the Provincetown Players. As quoted in Chapter 1, one of their aims was to create "native" drama. I would say that Susan Glaspell transcended frontiers. It is true that some of the themes seen in this thesis, above all those related to American myths, are mainly native, i.e. related to the United States. However, Glaspell's emphasis on the place women deserve to have, on women's struggle to create an identity of their own, and on assumed hierarchies of power geometry which usually leave women in unfavourable positions, are universal topics. This may explain Glaspell's success in the United Kingdom, not only while she was alive, but also more recently. The Orange Tree Theatre in Richmond (London) produced *The Verge* in 1996 and is now considering staging more of Glaspell's plays soon. *The Verge* was also produced at the University of Glasgow in 1996. *Trifles* has been produced recently at Suzhou University in China. Recently, *Trifles* has also been translated into Spanish,<sup>1</sup> and together with *The Outside*, *The Verge*, *Alison's House*, and *Bernice*; into Portuguese.<sup>2</sup> And the Susan Glaspell Society, founded in 2003,<sup>3</sup> is little by

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<sup>1</sup> See Shafer, Yvonne and Nieves Alberola (eds.) 2007. *Nimiedades para la eternidad*. Castellón: Ellago Ediciones.

<sup>2</sup> See Sander, Lucia V. (ed. ) 2002. *O Teatro de Susan Glaspell: Cinco peças*. Trans. Lucia V. Sander. Brazil: United States Embassy in Brazil.

<sup>3</sup> For more information about the Susan Glaspell Society see its web site: <https://www.susanglaspell.org>.

little increasing numbers outside the United States. Definitely, Susan Glaspell's appeal is not restricted to the United States or to her own times. Borrowing the same kind of language employed throughout this thesis, I would say that Susan Glaspell has been a victim of location for too long, trapped in the obscure corner of oblivion, in the closet where so many other female playwrights still are. Released from such entrapment some decades ago, Glaspell's departure still needs to be heard more strongly. Further studies of her work, together with research on the influence she has exerted upon many other writers, will help to maintain Glaspell in the very special room of her own she deserves in the great house of literary history.

**DOCUMENTACIÓN EN ESPAÑOL**  
**[DOCUMENTATION IN SPANISH]**

**RESUMEN**  
**[SUMMARY IN SPANISH]**

**RESUMEN**  
**STAGING THE POWER OF PLACE:**  
**GEOPATHOLOGY IN SUSAN GLASPELL'S THEATRE**  
**[EL PODER DEL LUGAR A ESCENA:**  
**GEOPATOLOGÍA EN EL TEATRO DE SUSAN GLASPELL]**

La presente tesis doctoral analiza las obras de la dramaturga norteamericana Susan Glaspell (1876- 1948) desde una perspectiva original: el estudio y análisis sistemático del espacio escénico sustentado en diversas teorías contemporáneas de la escena. La obra de esta excepcional dramaturga fue relegada al olvido durante décadas. Sin embargo, actualmente existe un interés creciente en su vida y obra, lo cual se refleja en la reciente publicación de varias biografías (Ben-Zvi 2005, Noe 1983, Ozieblo 2000), así como varias antologías y manuales sobre el análisis de la obra dramática y la ficción de esta autora (véase a modo de ejemplo Ben-Zvi 1995, Carpentier 2001, Carpentier 2006, Carpentier y Ozieblo 2006, Hinz-Bode 2006, Makowsky 1993, Gainor 2001) No obstante, no se ha publicado hasta el momento ningún análisis de la obra de Glaspell desde un punto de vista estrictamente teatral que se centre exclusivamente en el uso que Glaspell hace del espacio escénico. Más aún, la configuración que Glaspell elabora del espacio escénico a menudo ha sido identificada, por parte de la crítica, como “tradicional.” De esta forma, la mayoría de los críticos han preferido centrarse en los personajes originales que Glaspell crea en sus obras, dejando de lado y tan sólo mencionando de pasada el espacio escénico en que estos personajes se sitúan. Esta tesis analiza la confluencia del personaje y el espacio escénico en la obra dramática de Glaspell.

En el Capítulo 1, *The Stage Space in the American Theatre of the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century* [El espacio escénico en el teatro americano de principios del siglo XX], presento una breve descripción de cómo el espacio escénico ha ido cambiando a lo largo de la historia hasta el momento en que Glaspell empezó a escribir para los Provincetown Players. Este capítulo se centra especialmente en cómo corrientes como el Naturalismo o los diferentes Modernismos, así como movimientos políticos y sociales, dieron forma a la escena americana, y concretamente, a las obras de los Provincetown Players. También explico aquí brevemente la historia de los Provincetown Players, destacando su compromiso con la experimentación teatral, los escasos recursos económicos con los

que contaban, y la realidad física de los diferentes escenarios con los que contaron a lo largo de su trayectoria, puesto que estas cuestiones determinarían en gran medida la tipología de decorados que Glaspell creaba.

El Capítulo 2, *Towards Geopathology in Susan Glaspell's Modern Drama* [Hacia la geopatología en el teatro moderno de Susan Glaspell], presenta el marco teórico que sustenta esta tesis. Primero, discute definiciones de términos fundamentales como espacio y lugar, su relación con otros términos clave en esta tesis, como poder, política de género, papeles sociales o performatividad, y la medida en que estos conceptos se han empleado en estudios dramáticos y teatrales. En este término se analizan y discuten los trabajos de diversos filósofos, geógrafos y críticos, entre otros Henri Lefèbvre, Doreen Massey, Daphne Spain y Judith Butler. Segundo, se presenta un modelo semiótico de análisis teatral, basado en los trabajos de autores como Elaine Aston y George Savona (1991); M<sup>a</sup> del Carmen Bobes Naves (1997, 2001), Keir Elam (2001), Erika Fischer-Lichte (1999), Gay McAuley (2000), Manuel Sito Alba (1987); y Anne Ubersfeld (1989, 1997).

De forma más específica, en este segundo capítulo se discute una de las obras clave, también de carácter semiótico, que ha inspirado esta tesis; *Staging Place: The Geography of Modern Drama* (1995) de Una Chaudhuri, la cual gira en torno al concepto del espacio dentro del discurso dramático. Concretamente, Chaudhuri analiza la importancia del espacio para el propio desarrollo estético e intelectual de una pieza teatral, a la vez que introduce un concepto novedoso para el estudio del teatro contemporáneo: la geopatología. Este concepto explica el espacio recreado en una obra dramática, normalmente la figura del hogar, como el problema fundamental que afecta la configuración de los personajes que el dramaturgo sitúa en dicho espacio. Chaudhuri propone ciertos factores clave para identificar un espacio escénico como geopatológico. Entre estos factores cabría destacar la representación escénica de la figura del hogar como “refugio” o “prisión,” la jerarquización y división del espacio escénico en esferas, dicotomías y oposiciones binarias entre “dentro” y “fuera,” “aquí” y “allí,” y “afiliación” y “alienación,” el mito americano de la movilidad, el alcoholismo, la destrucción de la naturaleza y la imagen del niño muerto. La confluencia de estos factores da lugar a lo que Chaudhuri llama “victimización del lugar,” el principio que explica cómo los personajes se ven atrapados y afectados de forma negativa por las

condiciones que el espacio escénico representa. Estos personajes sólo pueden soñar con escapar de estos lugares, un segundo principio que Chaudhuri llama “heroísmo de la partida.” Además de delinear y analizar estos principios, en este capítulo se discuten relaciones entre la geopatología dramática, Realismo y feminismo.

La consecución de los siguientes capítulos responde a los factores geopatológicos que Chaudhuri apunta, siendo aquí desarrollados con detenimiento, así como en otros factores que aparecen de forma consistente en la dramaturgia de Susan Glaspell. Los capítulos del 3 al 6 se centran en los diversos factores que integran el concepto de *victimización del lugar*, y se encuentran resumidos en la tabla del Apéndice 1. El Capítulo 3, *American Geomythologies Revisited as Part of Dramatic Geopathology* [Revisiones de geomitologías americanas como parte de la geopatología dramática], pone de relieve el choque existente entre dos geomitología americanas, el mito del hogar vs. el mito del viaje. Como se discute en este capítulo, Glaspell revisa este choque en los casos concretos del Mito de la Movilidad, el Mito Pionero, el Sueño Americano y la Ciudad sobre la colina. Con relación al Mito de la Movilidad, en este capítulo también se analiza el tropo de la invasión, y la situación de personajes que se encuentran fuera de lugar y de personajes marcados como “Otros” étnica o racialmente. Muy brevemente, ya que en la obra de Glaspell estos factores no aparecen con frecuencia, este capítulo discute desórdenes geopatológicos unidos a la revisión del Mito de la Movilidad, como son las adicciones al alcohol y al tabaco. Como este primer capítulo de análisis comienza a vislumbrar, los personajes geopatológicos de Glaspell son normalmente inmóviles, y especialmente en el caso de sus personajes femeninos, relegados a permanecer entre las cuatro paredes de sus hogares. Más aún, el personaje que tiene un problema con el lugar que habita también puede ver cómo su casa es invadida por otros personajes que, al no tener un hogar propio (lo que constituye su propio problema con el lugar), deciden ocupar el de otros. El caso de los personajes llamados “Otros” por sus diferencias raciales o étnicas es bastante claro en lo referente a su exclusión de las geomitologías americanas, de hecho ni siquiera aparecerán en escena, y tan sólo sabremos de su situación por referencias verbales.

En el Capítulo 4, *Geodichotomies in the Configuration of Dramatic Geopathology* [Geodicotomías en la configuración de la geopatología dramática], se presentan, analizan y discuten las dicotomías espaciales, tanto físicas como verbales, en



las que Glaspell se apoya para configurar sus espacios escénicos. Este capítulo se divide en cuatro secciones que tratan aspectos geodictómicos diferentes, pero muy relacionados entre ellos: aislamiento geográfico vs. comunidad; hogar como prisión vs. hogar como refugio; dentro vs. fuera. En este capítulo discuto la consistencia de estas dicotomías y si mantienen un significado fijo en las obras de Glaspell. El típico personaje geopatológico de la obra de Glaspell se encuentra aislado, su hogar se ha convertido en una prisión más que en un refugio, y se encuentra dentro cuando desearía estar fuera. Sin embargo, como analizo en las diferentes obras de Glaspell, los significados de estas dicotomías no son inamovibles, y unas veces la victimización del lugar vendrá por estar fuera cuando se quiere estar dentro, por querer convertir el hogar en un refugio, o porque las fronteras entre prisión y refugio y dentro y fuera han desaparecido. Además, en este capítulo se consideran las connotaciones metafóricas de estas dicotomías físicas, pues normalmente el estar dentro o fuera se refiere a las normas sociales, familiares o morales, y no meramente a un espacio físico.

El Capítulo 5, *The Burden of the Past in Dramatic Geopathology* [La carga del pasado en la geopatología dramática], analiza la representación espacial del pasado en las obra de Glaspell, prestando atención a aquellos pasados que más interesaban a Glaspell; a saber las herencias de los Pioneros y de los Padres Peregrinos. Este capítulo discute cómo la presencia espacial de estos pasados, por ejemplo en los muebles, retratos u objetos, afecta a los personajes hasta el punto de convertirlos en víctimas del lugar. En muchas ocasiones en la obra de Glaspell, sus personajes encuentran una carga espacial en su pasado, porque esta tradición no les permite actuar o moverse libremente. En otros casos, veremos que es el mal uso o la apropiación indebida que se ha hecho de esta herencia lo que lleva a otros personajes a tener un problema con el lugar. Este capítulo también analiza la teoría de la performatividad de Judith Butler en relación con la tradición, la herencia y el espacio, esto es, cómo Glaspell sugiere en escena que la tradición se reafirma y asegura en el espacio a través de la repetición de actos dados en lugares dados, creando un problema con el espacio para aquellos personajes sometidos por tradición a realizar los mismos actos en los mismos lugares impuestos. El tema del conflicto generacional, aquél entre padres e hijos, madres e hijas, y mujeres modernas vs. mujeres tradicionales, también forma parte de este capítulo. Las diferentes generaciones tienen diferentes ideas que quieren proyectar en los lugares que habitan, dando pie a luchas en el espacio por estas ideas diferentes. De forma específica, este

capítulo trata el tema de la colisión entre la New Woman y la Victorian Woman que aparece en las obras de Glaspell.

El Capítulo 6, *Imagery of Death in Dramatic Geopathology* [Imágenes de muerte en la geopatología dramática], estudia imágenes espaciales físicas y verbales relacionadas con las muertes que aparecen en las obras de Glaspell, y que también contribuyen a la configuración de personajes como víctimas del lugar. Este capítulo se encuentra dividido en cuatro secciones. La primera analiza aquellas obras en las que Glaspell presenta la figura de la casa como tumba; física o simbólica, y concluyente respecto a la creación de una atmósfera geopatológica donde los personajes están muertos en vida. En segundo lugar, la imagen del niño enterrado; ampliada al niño ausente o no-nato, relevante para analizar el papel de personajes infantiles como víctimas del lugar o como contribuyentes a la creación de geopatología. En la obra de Glaspell, el hecho de que los niños mueran, desaparezcan o no nazcan en determinadas localizaciones está relacionado con la victimización del lugar: esa localización era hostil para el niño o lo es para la madre que lo perdió o que nunca lo tuvo. En tercer lugar, este capítulo presenta lugares de guerra; discutiendo el discurso de Glaspell sobre la guerra como un factor clave en la geopatología dramática. Glaspell hace que sus personajes hablen, recreen y visualicen la muerte violenta de otros personajes en zonas de guerra como contraste al lugar que se presenta en escena y para discurrir acerca de los enfrentamientos armados por ocupar espacios; metáfora de la atmósfera geopatológica que envuelve al mundo real. Finalmente, este capítulo analiza la configuración del hogar como un lugar embrujado, donde la presencia metafísica de personajes ausentes convierte el lugar en escena en un grave problema para los personajes que ahí se encuentran.

El capítulo final del presente análisis, *Dramatic Principles of Departure* [Principios dramáticos de la partida], resumido en la tabla en el Apéndice 2, analiza los medios dramáticos que Glaspell emplea para solucionar, cuando es posible, la victimización del lugar de sus personajes. En este capítulo discuto el concepto del *heroísmo de la partida* de Una Chaudhuri, y propongo una ampliación de este concepto basándome en las imágenes, verbales y físicas, que Glaspell crea para que sus personajes puedan liberarse física o simbólicamente del poder maligno del lugar. Estas soluciones varían desde la partida física del lugar representado en escena (el único

principio propuesto por Chaudhuri), a hacer que sean otros personajes los que dejen el lugar, subversiones de las geometrías de poder que operaban en ese lugar mediante cambios substanciosos en la performatividad de los personajes, la redecoración física del lugar, el arte, la naturaleza, o el acto de reconciliación entre las generaciones.

Finalmente, en el apartado último de esta tesis, Conclusions [Conclusiones], resumo muy brevemente los puntos principales del presente estudio y sugiero futuras líneas de investigación originadas en la presente tesis doctoral. La conclusión implícita de esta tesis es que la obra dramática de Susan Glaspell ejemplifica, entre otros aspectos, la creación de la geopatología en los espacios escénicos del teatro contemporáneo norteamericano. Esta tesis concluye que Susan Glaspell crea imágenes dramáticas excepcionales que podrían encuadrarse y ampliar el corpus de imágenes geopatológicas establecido por Una Chaudhuri. El método de análisis de espacios escénicos para determinar su calidad dramática geopatológica que esta investigación ha propuesto es novedoso en cuanto a su sistematización y detalle. Por este motivo, este modelo podría servir como base para posteriores estudios sobre la recreación escénica de espacios geopatológicos, tanto en obras dramáticas como narrativas.

**INTRODUCCIÓN**  
**[INTRODUCTION IN SPANISH]**

## INTRODUCCIÓN

Susan Glaspell's appeal is first to the mind, and when she reaches the heart she does so completely and in a way not to be lightly forgotten by those who have yielded to its power.<sup>1</sup>  
(Royde-Smith 1926: 25)

Susan Glaspell (1876- 1948), a quien aún hoy se la reconoce sólo tímidamente como la madre del teatro americano moderno, una vez fue considerada “the great American thinker in dramatic form. She is the spirit and the mind and the soul of the real America of to-day, expressed in literature”<sup>2</sup> (Rohe 1921: 18). Sus obras solían compararse con maestros como Chejov, Ibsen, Maeterlinck o Shaw.<sup>3</sup> De hecho, a un crítico de su tiempo le bastó el trabajo de Susan Glaspell para justificar la existencia de los Provincetown Players, el grupo teatral que revolucionaría la escena americana en la segunda década del siglo XX: “If the Provincetown Players had done nothing more than to give us the delicately humorous and sensitive plays of Susan Glaspell, they would have amply justified their existence”<sup>4</sup> (Corbin 1919: np). Pero no sólo sus obras dieron sentido a la existencia de los Provincetown Players, pues Glaspell era además una fuerza increíble detrás de otros dramaturgos del grupo, como Eugene O’Neill. Una amiga de sus tiempos universitarios recordaba a Glaspell como “my first heroine in the flesh, a glamorous presence of poetry and romance who fired one’s imagination and made all glorious things seem possible. Her personality was a flame in the life of the student body, or at any rate in the group that felt themselves the social and literary leaders”<sup>5</sup> (Fowler 1928: np).

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<sup>1</sup> “En primer lugar Susan Glaspell llega a la mente, y cuando llega al corazón, lo hace tan completamente y de tal forma que aquellos que sucumbieron a su poder no pueden olvidarlo fácilmente.”

<sup>2</sup> “la gran pensadora americana del género teatral. Es el espíritu y la mente y el alma de la América real de hoy, reflejada en su literatura.”

<sup>3</sup> Véase por ejemplo Corbin 1919: np para una comparación entre Glaspell y Maeterlinck, Hedges 1923: 393, donde la contribución de Glaspell a los Estados Unidos se iguala a aquella de Ibsen a Noruega, en “Tchehov and Susan Glaspell” 1929: np, se compara Glaspell con Chejov, y Edwin Björkman llama a Glaspell “an American Shaw” [“una Shaw americana”] (1920: 518).

<sup>4</sup> “Si los Provincetown Players no hubieran hecho otra cosa mas que darnos las delicadamente cómicas y sensibles obras de Susan Glaspell, ya habrían justificado ampliamente su existencia.”

<sup>5</sup> “mi primera heroína de carne y hueso, una presencia hechizante de poesía y romance que incendiaba nuestra imaginación y hacía que las cosas gloriosas parecieran posibles. Su personalidad era una llama en las vidas del cuerpo estudiantil, o de cualquier modo, en el grupo que sentía portar el liderazgo social y literario.”

Afortunadamente, y aunque aún queda mucho trabajo por hacer para devolver por siempre a Glaspell al lugar que merece en el teatro americano, el cual una vez ocupó y del que fue eliminada,<sup>6</sup> estudiosos del teatro reconocen su mérito, aunque sólo sea por su muy aclamada obra *Trifles* (1916). C. W. E. Bigsby editó en 1987 una antología de algunas obras de Glaspell, incluyendo *Trifles*, *The Outside*, *Inheritors* y *The Verge*,<sup>7</sup> lo que ciertamente alentó la aparición de trabajos críticos sobre su obra. Como Linda Ben-Zvi ha afirmado, tras la resucitación de Glaspell a finales de los 70 y principios de los 80 con los trabajos pioneros de Annette Kolodny (1986) y Judith Fetterley (1986), “Glaspell’s criticism has moved to a second stage – assessing the work of this important writer, no longer arguing her case”<sup>8</sup> (1995a: 131). Recientemente han aparecido numerosos estudios que evalúan la obra de Glaspell desde diferentes perspectivas. Tras el estudio global de Veronica Makowsky, *Susan Glaspell’s Century of American Women. A Critical Interpretation of Her Work* (1993), y la aplaudida antología de Linda Ben-Zvi, *Susan Glaspell. Essays on her Theater and Fiction* (1995), ya influida de forma notable por diferentes corrientes feministas, cientos de artículos han aparecido desde entonces. Barbara Ozieblo publicó la primera biografía completa de Susan Glaspell, titulada *Susan Glaspell. A Critical Biography* (2000), tras la primera biografía que Marcia Noe publicó en 1983 bajo el título *Susan Glaspell: Voice from the Heartland*. El interés alrededor de Glaspell es de tal magnitud que en 2005 se publicó otro estudio de la vida de esta autora, *Susan Glaspell. Her Life and Times*, obra de Linda Ben-Zvi, lo que demuestra la incipiente curiosidad que Glaspell suscita. Otros excelentes trabajos críticos también han sido publicados últimamente, como la obra de J. Ellen Gainor *Susan Glaspell in Context. American Theater, Culture and Politics 1914-48* (2001), la primera que se centró de forma exclusiva en el teatro de Susan Glaspell, proporcionando un estudio sobresaliente y bastante exhaustivo del contexto social, político e ideológico alrededor de la obra de Glaspell, así como de la recepción

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<sup>6</sup> No debe olvidarse que Susan Glaspell recibió un Premio Pulitzer por *Alison’s House* en 1931, un premio muy merecido no sólo por esta obra, sino por su carrera en el teatro.

<sup>7</sup> Hasta la fecha la antología de Bigsby es la única publicación reciente de las obras de Glaspell. Mientras *Trifles* aparece en numerosas antologías, *Suppressed Desires* se puede encontrar en la antología de Barbara Ozieblo *The Provincetown Players. A Choice of the Shorter Works* (1994), así como en *1915. The Cultural Moment* (1991), editado por Heller and Rudnick. Linda Ben-Zvi y J. Ellen Gainor están actualmente trabajando en la edición de las obras completas de Glaspell, incluyendo aquellas obras que nunca se publicaron: *Chains of Dew* y *Springs Eternal*.

<sup>8</sup> “La crítica sobre Glaspell se ha movido a una segunda fase, evaluando el trabajo de esta importante escritora, no ya defendiendo su caso.”

crítica que esta dramaturga recibió en su tiempo. Siendo tan necesarias, pronto otras antologías se sumaron a estos estudios. Recientemente Martha C. Carpentier y Barbara Ozieblo han editado el volumen *Disclosing Intertextualities. The Stories, Plays and Novels of Susan Glaspell* (2006), ampliando el ámbito del estudio crítico de Glaspell a su narrativa.<sup>9</sup> Igualmente importantes son la antología de Carpentier *Susan Glaspell: New Directions in Critical Inquiry* (2006), la cual recoge capítulos brillantes sobre el teatro y la narrativa de Glaspell, y el estudio de Kristina Hinz-Bode *Susan Glaspell and the Anxiety of Expression. Language and Isolation in the Plays* (2006), centrado en el uso teatral que Glaspell da al lenguaje “both as theme and as a medium of artistic expression”<sup>10</sup> (Hinz-Bode 2006b: 5).

El propósito de la presente tesis doctoral está unido a esta segunda fase en la crítica de la obra de Susan Glaspell: la evaluación de su obra dramática. De hecho, la presente tesis enfoca uno de los elementos esenciales del teatro: el espacio. Este estudio es el fruto de un largo camino, de profundas reflexiones sobre las cuidadas configuraciones del espacio escénico que aparecen en la mayoría de las obras de Glaspell. En una ocasión Glaspell dijo sobre su teatro que “there is no use repeating old forms. We are changing and we should reflect that change”<sup>11</sup> (Glaspell en Rohe 1921: 18). Una mujer que estaba seriamente comprometida con su tiempo, que proclamaba su interés “in all progressive movements, whether feminist, social or economic”<sup>12</sup> y que tomaba un papel muy activo a través de lo que escribía (Glaspell en Rohe 1921: 18), Glaspell no dudó en emplear el espacio escénico para reflejar los cambios que veía a su alrededor, así como los cambios que ella creía que debían tener lugar.

Algunos estudiosos han sugerido la importancia que Glaspell da a los lugares que recrea en escena como medio para entender sus personajes o los temas principales de algunas de sus obras. En este sentido, Linda Ben-Zvi afirma que Glaspell estaba

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<sup>9</sup> El primer trabajo extenso sobre las novelas de Glaspell es el estudio de Martha C. Carpentier *The Major Novels of Susan Glaspell* (2001).

<sup>10</sup> “tanto como tema como medio de expresión artística.”

<sup>11</sup> “no tiene sentido repetir formas antiguas. Estamos cambiando y debemos reflejar ese cambio.”

<sup>12</sup> “en todos los movimientos progresistas, feministas, sociales o económicos.”

dotada de “a vivid spatial recall”<sup>13</sup> (2005: 172) que emplearía en sus creaciones dramáticas. J. Ellen Gainor observa,

One key achievement of [Glaspell’s] drama is her ability to make the stage environment come alive as another player in performance. The vibrancy of place in such works as *Trifles*, *The Outside*, *Bernice*, *The Verge*, and *Alison’s House* literally makes the sets she envisions function as characters – not backdrops to the action but central parts of it.<sup>14</sup> (2001: 7)

El análisis del espacio que algunos críticos han llevado a cabo se ha centrado en obras específicas. Por ejemplo, Marcia Noe ha analizado brevemente cómo Glaspell emplea la región geográfica como metáfora en *Trifles*, *Inheritors*, *The Outside* y *The Comic Artist* (1981: 77- 85). El espacio escénico también ha sido el foco de atención de algunos artículos de Karen Alkalay-Gut (1984: 1- 9), o John Kantack, quien afirma que en *Trifles* es el espacio dramático de la cocina lo que pone en marcha la obra (2003: 149- 163). J. Ellen Gainor ha observado una “thematic relation between setting and action, as for example, the kitchen environment of *Trifles* and the almost anthropomorphized homes”<sup>15</sup> de *Bernice* y *Alison’s House*, donde los lugares recreados en escena representan a las protagonistas (2001: 75). Gainor también apunta que *The Verge* trata “directly with the theme of inside/outside on both literal and metaphysical levels, it also makes use of the dramatic potential of her set”<sup>16</sup> (1989: 82). Y Klaus Schwank, entre otros estudiosos, ha observado que en *The Outside* existe una fuerte relación simbólica entre el decorado y la acción de la obra (1989: 413- 421).

Sin embargo, y a pesar de que el espacio siempre tiene un lugar en los estudios de otros críticos, parece que este análisis no ha sido lo suficientemente profundo ni extenso. Estoy completamente de acuerdo con la importancia que estos críticos otorgan a los espacios escénicos que Glaspell configura en sus obras, y el objetivo del presente

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<sup>13</sup> “una memoria espacial viva.”

<sup>14</sup> “Uno de los logros clave de la dramaturgia [de Glaspell] es su habilidad para hacer que el entorno escénico se convierta en otro actor. La vitalidad del lugar en obras como *Trifles*, *The Outside*, *Bernice*, *The Verge* y *Alison’s House* literalmente hace que los escenarios que Glaspell concibe funcionen como personajes – no como telones de fondo para la acción sino como partes centrales de la misma.”

<sup>15</sup> “relación temática entre decorado y acción, como por ejemplo, el entorno de la cocina en *Trifles* y los hogares casi antropomórficos”.

<sup>16</sup> “directamente con el tema dentro/fuera tanto a nivel literal como metafísico, también hace uso del potencial dramático del decorado.”



estudio es extraer toda la sustancia posible de las escenografías de Susan Glaspell. Como Linda Ben-Zvi dice:

The most consistent theme in her fiction and plays is the drive of the protagonists – usually women- to escape forms thrust upon them by the society in which they live. The direction in a Glaspell work is outward, from the confining circle of society to the freedom of ‘the outside.’<sup>17</sup> (1982: 23)

La presente tesis doctoral ofrece un análisis profundo de los espacios dramáticos de Glaspell y de las relaciones que esta dramaturga establece entre estos lugares y sus personajes y el desarrollo dramático de sus obras. De forma más concreta, y teniendo en cuenta la insistencia de Glaspell sobre la fuerte relación entre lugar y personaje, este tesis se centra en el concepto dramático de la geopatología, un concepto novedoso nunca aplicado a la obra de Glaspell antes, y que Una Chaudhuri acuñó en 1995 para referirse a un fenómeno común en el teatro norteamericano moderno, un fenómeno caracterizado por el hecho de que la acción dramática se basa en la configuración de personajes como víctimas de un lugar del que han de escapar. Esta tesis sistematiza y amplía el análisis que Chaudhuri propone, desarrollando además el concepto de geopatología en el caso particular de personajes femeninos, dado que la mayoría de los protagonistas de las obras de Glaspell son mujeres. O como un crítico las definió: “the most distinguished achievements in character creation in the entire range of American drama. They are rebels, every one of them – idealistic rebels, and Miss Glaspell bravely centres them in conflicts siding with the idealistic minority, in its struggle with the overwhelming legions who serve Mammon and mediocrity”<sup>18</sup> (Solow 1930: np). El presente estudio, no obstante, también considerará la posibilidad de que los personajes masculinos de Susan Glaspell sean víctimas del lugar.

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<sup>17</sup> “El tema más consistente en su narrativa y teatro es el esfuerzo de sus protagonistas – normalmente mujeres – para escapar de las formas que la sociedad en la que viven les impone. La dirección en una obra de Glaspell es hacia fuera, desde el círculo limitador de la sociedad hacia la libertad de ‘fuera.’”

<sup>18</sup> “Los logros más eminentes en la creación de personajes de todo el teatro americano. Son rebeldes, todas y cada una de ellas – rebeldes idealistas, y la señorita Glaspell de forma valiente las sitúa en conflictos que las alía con minorías idealistas, en lucha con las legiones arrolladoras que sirven al Dinero y a la mediocridad.”

“Staging the Power of Place: Geopathology in Susan Glaspell’s Theatre” [“El poder del lugar a escena: Geopatología en el teatro de Susan Glaspell”] se basa en un sistema semiótico de análisis que posibilita la concepción de todos los elementos escenográficos como signos y detallar el proceso de creación de la geopatología dramática. Teniendo en cuenta estudios anteriores sobre Glaspell, así como su contexto teatral, cultural, político e incluso personal, esta tesis presta especial atención a una tarea que no se ha llevado a cabo completamente en estudios previos sobre la obra de Glaspell, y ésta es cómo Glaspell construye espacios escénicos a través de los elementos no dinámicos (puertas, paredes, ventanas, muebles y utillaje) así como a través de elementos dinámicos, como los personajes, su vestuario, y las relaciones kinésicas con el lugar en el que están y con otros personajes. En lo referente a la metodología que sustenta el presente estudio, es principalmente dramático y no teatral. No he tenido la oportunidad de ver ninguna producción de las obras de Glaspell. No obstante he trabajado de forma cuidadosa con los textos, con fotografías de producciones originales y tempranas, así como con fotografías de lugares que habrían inspirado a Glaspell, que en su conjunto me han ayudado a visualizar las escenografías como Glaspell probablemente las concibió. En el caso de *Trifles*, la maravillosa versión cinematográfica de Sally Heckel, *A Jury of her Peers* (1981), también me proporcionó una excelente ayuda visual.<sup>19</sup>

La presente tesis doctoral incluye la mayoría de las obras de Susan Glaspell.<sup>20</sup> Pero las obras que serán analizadas de forma más exhaustiva son aquellas cuyo decorado representa un hogar: *Suppressed Desires* (1915), escrita en colaboración con George Cram Cook, *Trifles* (1916), *The Outside* (1917), *Close the Book* (1917), *Bernice* (1919), *Chains of Dew* (1920), *Inheritors* (1921), *The Verge* (1921), *The Comic Artist* (1927), en colaboración con Norman Matson, *Alison’s House* (1930), y *Springs Eternal*

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<sup>19</sup> Estoy agradecida a Marta Fernández Morales por compartir esta película conmigo.

<sup>20</sup> Las ediciones empleadas en este estudio son: *Plays by Susan Glaspell*, Ed. C. W. E. Bigsby, para *Trifles*, *The Outside*, *The Verge* e *Inheritors*. Las referencias de *Suppressed Desires* pertenecen a *The Provincetown Players*. Ed. Barbara Ozieblo. Las versiones de *Bernice*, *Woman’s Honor*, y *The People* han sido tomadas de *Plays* (1920). Las referencias a *Alison’s House* pertenecen a su publicación en *The Pulitzer Prize Plays, 1918- 1934*. Eds. Kathryn Coe y William H. Cordell. Para *The Comic Artist* he empleado la edición de Ernest Benn de 1927. Las referencias de *Chains of Dew* y *Springs Eternal* corresponden a versiones mecanografiadas, por las que estoy muy agradecida a Barbara Ozieblo. Futuras referencias a estas obras detallarán el número de página entre paréntesis.

(1943).<sup>21</sup> He elegido estas obras porque parecen compartir unas cualidades espaciales que ponen en funcionamiento el mecanismo de la geopatología dramática, a saber, la relación directa entre el espacio en escena, el tipo de personaje que Glaspell pone en dicho espacio y el desarrollo dramático de estas obras, así como un brillante lenguaje espacial. Tres son las obras de Glaspell que no forman parte en profundidad del corpus de análisis de esta tesis: *The People* (1917), *Woman's Honor* (1918) y *Tickless Time* (1918). *The People* y *Woman's Honor*, aunque ambientadas en espacios cerrados, no parecen ofrecer muchas posibilidades para un estudio sobre geopatología dramática. *The People* tiene lugar en la oficina de una revista radical y *Woman's Honor* en la casa del sheriff. Aunque ambientada en una casa, *Tickless Time*, también escrita en colaboración con Cook, está construida en el exterior, en el jardín de una pareja bohemia en Provincetown, no llega a lograr la atmósfera geopatológica de otras obras. Sin embargo, *The People* y *Woman's Honor* serán brevemente analizadas a lo largo de esta tesis, pues de forma sutil, estas dos obras también proporcionan detalles acerca del concepto que Glaspell tenía sobre el poder del lugar para la caracterización de sus personajes y el desarrollo dramático de sus obras.

La organización de la presente tesis es la siguiente: Los dos primeros capítulos proporcionan en marco teórico. El Capítulo 1, *The Stage Space in the American Theatre of the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century* [El espacio escénico en el teatro americano de principios del siglo XX], ofrece un breve apunte sobre el desarrollo del espacio escénico hasta el momento en que Glaspell empezó a escribir para los Provincetown Players. Este capítulo se centra especialmente en cómo corrientes como el Naturalismo o los diferentes Modernismos, así como movimientos políticos y sociales, dieron forma a la escena americana, y concretamente, a las obras de los Provincetown Players. También explico aquí brevemente la historia de los Provincetown Players, destacando su compromiso con la experimentación teatral y los medios con los que contaban, puesto que estas cuestiones determinarían en gran medida la tipología de decorados que Glaspell creaba. El Capítulo 2, *Towards Geopathology in Susan Glaspell's Modern*

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<sup>21</sup> Las fechas proporcionadas corresponden al estreno, excepto en el caso de *Springs Eternal*, jamás puesta en escena, y fechada de acuerdo al manuscrito. Debe tenerse en cuenta que aunque *Chains of Dew* se estrenó en 1922, lo que hizo que muchos estudiosos pensarán que Glaspell la escribió después de *The Verge*, Ozieblo descubrió que Glaspell había escrito *Chains of Dew* antes, en 1920 (2000: 155). En cuanto a las obras escritas en colaboración, *Suppressed Desires* y *The Comic Artist*, aunque es imposible determinar inequívocamente qué partes escribió Glaspell y cuales sus colaboradores, la consistencia en el lenguaje dramático y cierto grupo de imágenes que aparecen en otros trabajos atribuidos exclusivamente a Glaspell, me han llevado a considerar estas dos obras miembros de pleno derecho en el presente estudio.

Drama [Hacia la geopatología en el teatro moderno de Susan Glaspell], discute definiciones de términos fundamentales como espacio y lugar, su relación con otros términos clave en esta tesis, como poder, política de género, papeles sociales o performatividad, y la medida en que estos términos se han empleado en estudios dramáticos y teatrales. Este capítulo proporciona el método que nutre el presente estudio, y explica y discute términos básicos que integran la teoría de Chaudhuri sobre la geopatología dramática. En este capítulo se explica el papel central de la figura del hogar dentro de la geopatología dramática, cómo se consigue el *victimización del lugar* a través de figuras como oposiciones espaciales binarias o la imagen del niño enterrado, y cómo el *heroísmo de la partida* es la meta con la que los *personajes geopatológicos* tan sólo pueden soñar. En este capítulo también argumento las relaciones entre geopatología dramática, Realismo y feminismo.

Los Capítulos comprendidos entre el 3 y el 7 constituyen el análisis propiamente dicho de la geopatología en las obras de Susan Glaspell. Los capítulos del 3 al 6 cubren diferentes enfoques del concepto de *victimización del lugar*, los cuales resumo en el Apéndice 1. El Capítulo 3, American Geomythologies Revisited as Part of Dramatic Geopathology [Revisiones de geomitologías americanas como parte de la geopatología dramática], se centra en la revisión de mitos espaciales americanos que Glaspell lleva a cabo, como el Mito de la Movilidad, el Mito Pionero, el Sueño Americano o la Ciudad sobre la colina. Aquí discuto la manera en que Glaspell muestra en escena el choque entre el mito del hogar y el mito del viaje inherente a la cultura y tradición americanas, y el resultado de dicho choque. Este capítulo también presta especial atención al papel de otros aspectos relacionados con geomitologías americanas y la geopatología, como el tropo de la invasión, y la situación de personajes que se encuentran fuera de lugar y de personajes marcados como “Otros” étnica o racialmente. Este capítulo también dedica una sección breve a desórdenes geopatológicos unidos a la revisión del Mito de la Movilidad, como son las adicciones al alcohol y al tabaco. En el Capítulo 4, Geodichotomies in the Configuration of Dramatic Geopathology [Geodicotomías en la configuración de la geopatología dramática], me centro en dicotomías espaciales, tanto físicas como verbales, que codifican el mundo geopatológico de las obras de Susan Glaspell. Este capítulo se divide en cuatro secciones que tratan aspectos geodicotómicos diferentes, pero muy relacionados entre ellos: aislamiento geográfico vs. comunidad; hogar como prisión vs. hogar como refugio; dentro vs. fuera. En este capítulo discuto la

consistencia de estas dicotomías y si mantienen un significado fijo en las obras de Glaspell.

El Capítulo 5, *The Burden of the Past in Dramatic Geopathology* [La carga del pasado en la geopatología dramática], analiza cómo Glaspell representa el pasado en escena, prestando atención a aquellos pasados que más interesaban a Glaspell: las herencias de los Pioneros y de los Padres Peregrinos, y cómo la presencia espacial de estos pasados afecta a los personajes hasta el punto de convertirlos en víctimas del lugar. Este capítulo también analiza la teoría de la performatividad en relación a la tradición, la herencia y el espacio, esto es, cómo la tradición se reafirma y asegura en el espacio a través de la repetición de actos dados en lugares dados. También discuto aquí el empleo que Glaspell hace del tema del conflicto generacional, llevado a cabo en el espacio, como parte del problema que sus personajes tienen con el lugar que habitan. El Capítulo 6 *Imagery of Death in Dramatic Geopathology* [Imágenes de muerte en la geopatología dramática], estudia imágenes espaciales físicas y verbales relacionadas con la muertes que aparecen en las obras de Glaspell, y que también contribuyen a la configuración de personajes como víctimas del lugar. Este capítulo se encuentra dividido en cuatro secciones: la casa como tumba; que analiza la configuración del espacio escénico como una tumba física o simbólica, la imagen del niño enterrado; que estudia el papel de personajes infantiles como víctimas del lugar o como contribuyentes a la creación de geopatología, lugares de guerra; que discute el discurso de Glaspell sobre la guerra como un factor clave en la geopatología, y lugares embrujados; que trata de la representación espacial de personajes ausentes. El capítulo final de mi análisis, *Dramatic Principles of Departure* [Principios dramáticos de la partida], resumido en la tabla en el Apéndice 2, analiza los medios dramáticos que Glaspell emplea para solucionar, cuando es posible, la victimización del lugar de sus personajes. En este capítulo discuto el concepto del *heroísmo de la partida* de Una Chaudhuri, y propongo una ampliación de este concepto basándome en las imágenes, verbales y físicas, que Glaspell crea para que sus personajes puedan luchar contra el poder del lugar. Finalmente, en *Conclusions* [Conclusiones] resumo muy brevemente los puntos principales del presente estudio y sugiero futuras líneas de investigación originadas en la presente tesis doctoral.

**CONCLUSIONES**  
**[CONCLUSIONS IN SPANISH]**

## CONCLUSIONES

Art only becomes useful to man and society if it contains within it an urge to action.<sup>1</sup> (Brook 1989: 235)

Tras analizar la geopatología dramática en las piezas teatrales de Susan Glaspell, puedo afirmar que la experiencia ha sido satisfactoria por varios motivos. Una de las metas iniciales de esta tesis doctoral era analizar la consistencia entre los personajes de Glaspell y sus lugares como un medio para desarrollar las identidades de los personajes y para poner en funcionamiento el desarrollo dramático de las obras. Puedo concluir que la técnica dramática de Glaspell se basa fuertemente en estas relaciones. El presente estudio ha discutido los diferentes medios que Glaspell emplea para mostrar la *victimización del lugar* que sufren sus personajes. Comenzando por las imágenes, temas y tropos que Una Chaudhuri propone en *Staging Place*, no sólo hemos visto que la obra de Glaspell parece seguir el patrón que Chaudhuri proporciona, como por ejemplo en la revisión que Glaspell hace del Mito americano de la Movilidad, en la codificación dicotómica de sus mundos dramáticos, o en las imágenes del niño enterrado. Más aún, al centrarnos en la configuración física de los decorados de Glaspell, así como en sus metáforas e imágenes espaciales, esta tesis ha demostrado que las obras de Glaspell ofrecen una mayor variedad de imágenes y técnicas “geopatológicas.” Con el sólido apoyo proporcionado por geógrafas, críticas y escritoras feministas, esta tesis ha detectado y analizado otros medios que Glaspell emplea para sugerir geopatología en cuanto a sus personajes femeninos se refiere. De esta forma, el Mito Americano de la Movilidad que Chaudhuri propone de manera más general, se ha presentado aquí más detalladamente en cuanto al papel que las mujeres juegan en este mito, y relacionado con la (in)movilidad, esta tesis ha analizado el papel de la mujer, según Glaspell, en el Sueño Americano y el Mito Pionero. También he discutido dicotomías como representaciones del hogar como prisión vs. representaciones del hogar como refugio, o dentro vs. fuera, concluyendo que estas oposiciones binarias están en continuo cambio de significación en las obras de Glaspell, lo que sugiere la forma subjetiva en que codificamos el mundo y el hecho de que nuestras identidades están en un proceso continuo de reajuste. Otras de las figuras que Chaudhuri propone, como el regreso al hogar, el personaje inmigrante, adicciones, o la familia como problema, también han

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<sup>1</sup> “El arte sólo es útil para el hombre y la sociedad si contiene dentro de él una llamada a la acción.”

sido discutidas en esta tesis, junto a otras figuras ajenas a la teoría de Chaudhuri, como el aislamiento, la representación espacial del pasado e imágenes de muerte como génesis de la victimización del lugar. El modelo de Chaudhuri ha sido casi completamente abandonado en el capítulo final de esta tesis, pues su “heroísmo de la partida” ha sido transformado en “principios de la partida,” incluyendo las múltiples posibilidades que Glaspell ofrece a sus personajes como vía de escape a sus problemas con el lugar, como son el asesinato, el arte, o la coalición de mujeres.

Las cuestiones tratadas en el presente estudio me llevan a reafirmar que la estrecha relación entre los lugares que Glaspell recrea en escena y sus personajes, una relación bi-direccional en la que el lugar afecta a la identidad y viceversa, es más modernista que realista. Los lugares que Glaspell crea no son meros telones decorativos para sustentar la identidad de un personaje, como ocurre en el teatro puramente realista, sino entidades con las que los personajes entran en una dialéctica verbal y kinésica. Las imágenes y técnicas teatrales estudiadas en esta tesis no pueden sino hacerme concluir que la geopatología es, de hecho, central en la obras de Glaspell. Y creo que dada la complejidad alrededor de la creación de la geopatología dramática, esta teoría bien puede emplearse como un nivel evaluador de la calidad de obras dramáticas.

El presente estudio abre varias líneas de investigación. En primer término, el concepto de geopatología puede aplicarse a la narrativa de Susan Glaspell. Como he sugerido en diferentes secciones de esta tesis, las obras dramáticas, novelas y relatos de Glaspell a menudo tratan temas similares, y la victimización del lugar parece ser un aspecto común. A primera vista, las novelas e historias cortas de Glaspell suelen tener como protagonista a una mujer en búsqueda de una identidad propia y que además se encuentra atrapada en un lugar del que ha de escapar. Por ejemplo, en “Out There” (1912) Glaspell sugiere, como en muchas de sus obras teatrales, que el Sueño Americano no está hecho para mujeres. Su protagonista es una víctima del lugar porque se ve forzada a abandonar su querido pueblo natal para trabajar en Chicago. Intentando desesperadamente encontrar un lugar que pueda llamar suyo, la joven encuentra consuelo en unos dibujos de las montañas de su región que están expuestos en el escaparate de una tienda. Víctima de su geopatología, e incapaz de completar su regreso al hogar, la joven muere enfrente del escaparate que le muestra el sueño inalcanzable de sus montañas. Los personajes masculinos de los relatos de Glaspell también pueden



analizarse bajo el prisma de la geopatología. En esta tesis he intentado resaltar aquellos pocos ejemplos en las obras de Glaspell donde sus personajes masculinos son víctimas del lugar. Dado que en muchos de sus relatos y novelas Glaspell dibuja personajes masculinos de forma más detallada que en sus piezas teatrales, aquí aparece la oportunidad de analizar realmente si sus personajes masculinos son víctimas del lugar. En “The Manager of Crystal Sulphur Springs” (1915), por ejemplo, Bert Groves ha creado un mundo imaginario donde el sanatorio que su familia y él mismo construyeron todavía existe. Glaspell retrata en Bert a un personaje incapaz de vivir en una realidad donde los Grove han perdido su lugar y donde él es un inquilino en un asilo de pobres. Glaspell incluso presenta la eutanasia como el principio de la partida para Bert.

Como detallé en el Capítulo 1, dos de las características que, al menos teóricamente, marcaron la diferencia entre los Provincetown Players y otros pequeños grupos teatrales, fueron su sistema de trabajo y su espíritu de colaboración. Por lo tanto, sería interesante analizar si, dado el trabajo en equipo que promovían, las obras de otras mujeres de los Provincetown Players siguen el patrón de la geopatología dramática. Podría decir que obras como *Winter's Night* (1916) de Neith Boyce aparentemente siguen este patrón. En *Winter's Night*, una obra que de hecho tiene muchos paralelismos con *Trifles*, Rachel Westcott sufre la atmósfera limitadora de una granja del medio oeste americano. Liberada de su prisión cuando el telón se levanta, puesto que su marido acaba de morir y Rachel puede abandonar la granja, la protagonista debe combatir ahora la victimización del lugar cuando su cuñado pretende desesperadamente casarse con ella, forzándola a quedarse en la granja. En esta obra aparecen varias de las figuras e imágenes vistas en esta tesis: aislamiento, frío, muerte, violencia, dentro vs. fuera, consumo excesivo de alcohol, el niño enterrado, y el hogar como prisión. Además de analizar geopatología *per se*, también me parece interesante un posible análisis de las semejanzas y diferencias en el retrato de la victimización del lugar y de los principios de la partida en las obras de las mujeres de los Provincetown Players, para así evaluar en qué medida estas artistas colaboraron o se inspiraron unas a otras. De igual forma, se podría establecer una comparación entre las obras de Glaspell y sus colegas mujeres y las obras de los dramaturgos de los Provincetown Players. Este contraste podría ser enriquecedor. Como se ha visto en diferentes momentos de esta tesis, algunas de las obras de Eugene O'Neill se ajustan al patrón de la geopatología dramática, y algunas de las técnicas que Glaspell emplea para crear geopatología dramática también están

presentes en las obras de O'Neill. Estoy convencida de que otros dramaturgos del grupo emplearon técnicas y temas similares.

El método de análisis y los hallazgos de esta tesis también pueden aplicarse a dramaturgas más contemporáneas. Según Helen Krich Chinoy, Susan Glaspell, entre otras dramaturgas, asentó “the subjects and the structures now widely used by today’s women playwrights”<sup>2</sup> (1987: 131). En los siglos XX y XXI, igual que en el tiempo en que Glaspell escribió sus obras, todavía nos preocupa el tener una habitación propia, una habitación donde nuestra identidad pueda proyectarse y nutrirse. El teatro, como espejo de la problemática social, sigue ofreciendo su escenario para hacer al público pensar sobre estas cuestiones, llamándonos a reaccionar. Sería interesante comprobar si los factores clave que conducían a la victimización del lugar vistos en este estudio también aparecen, y de qué forma, en las obras de dramaturgas como Maria Irene Fornes, Suzan-Lori Parks, Paula Vogel, o Marcia Norman. Por ejemplo, en *Night, Mother* (1983) de Marcia Norman puede apreciarse cierta geopatología dramática en la representación del hogar como prisión para una mujer que se considera una madre y esposa fracasada, en el retrato de la familia rota, en el conflicto generacional entre madre e hija, en adicciones y en las imágenes de muerte que se agolpan en esta obra. Este tipo de análisis de la geopatología dramática, comparando la obra de Glaspell con obras más contemporáneas, revelaría si la afirmación de Elaine Showalter de que hay “an imaginary continuum, the recurrence of certain patterns, themes, problems, and images from generation to generation”<sup>3</sup> (1977: 12) es cierta o no en cuanto a las dramaturgas norteamericanas contemporáneas.

El método de análisis proporcionado en esta tesis también puede ser útil para analizar la geopatología dramática en obras de autoras fuera de los Estados Unidos de América. Hay un punto del ideario de los Provincetown Players que Glaspell no respetó del todo. Como cité en el Capítulo 1, uno de los objetivos del grupo era crear drama “nativo.” Pero Glaspell trascendió fronteras. Es cierto que algunos temas discutidos en esta tesis, sobre todo los relacionados con mitos americanos, son principalmente nativos, esto es, relacionados con los Estados Unidos. Sin embargo, el énfasis que

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<sup>2</sup> “los temas y estructuras que hoy en día muchas dramaturgas emplean.”

<sup>3</sup> “un continuo imaginario, la recurrencia de ciertos patrones, temas, problemas e imágenes de generación en generación.”

Glaspell pone en el lugar que las mujeres merecen tener, en la lucha de las mujeres por tener una identidad propia, y en las jerarquías de geometrías de poder establecidas que normalmente dejan a las mujeres en situaciones poco favorables, son temas universales. Esto puede explicar el éxito de Glaspell en el Reino Unido, no sólo durante su vida, sino también más recientemente. El Orange Tree Theatre en Richmond (Londres) produjo *The Verge* en 1996 y actualmente planea poner sobre el escenario más obras de Glaspell en un futuro próximo. La Universidad de Glasgow también produjo *The Verge* en 1996. *Trifles* se ha producido hace poco en la Universidad de Suzhou en China. Recientemente, *Trifles* se ha traducido al castellano,<sup>4</sup> y junto a *The Outside*, *The Verge*, *Alison's House* y *Bernice* al portugués.<sup>5</sup> Y la Susan Glaspell Society, fundada in 2003,<sup>6</sup> poco a poco crece en cuanto a afiliados fuera de los Estados Unidos. Definitivamente, el atractivo de Susan Glaspell no se encuentra reducido a los Estados Unidos o a su propio tiempo. Haciendo uso del vocabulario empleado en esta tesis, diría que Susan Glaspell ha sido una víctima del lugar durante demasiado tiempo, atrapada en la oscura esquina del olvido, en el armario donde muchas otras dramaturgas aún se encuentran. Liberada de este encierro hace algunas décadas, el heroísmo de la partida de Glaspell necesita escucharse más fuerte. Futuros estudios sobre su obra, junto con investigaciones acerca de la influencia que ejerció y que aún ejerce sobre muchos otros escritores y escritoras, ayudarán a mantener a Glaspell en esa habitación propia especial que merece en la gran mansión de la historia de la literatura.

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<sup>4</sup> Véase Shafer, Yvonne y Nieves Alberola (eds.) 2007. *Nimiedades para la eternidad*. Castellón: Ellago Ediciones.

<sup>5</sup> Véase Sander, Lucia V. (ed. ) 2002. *O Teatro de Susan Glaspell: Cinco peças*. Trad. Lucia V. Sander. Brazil: United States Embassy in Brazil.

<sup>6</sup> Para más información sobre la Susan Glaspell Society visite su página web: <https://www.susanglaspell.org>.

## **APPENDIX**

# APPENDIX 1. CHART OF ANALYSIS OF DRAMATIC VICTIMAGE OF LOCATION IN SUSAN GLASPELL'S PLAYS

TITLE	GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION	REVISION OF AMERICAN MYTH OF MOBILITY
<i>Suppressed Desires</i> (1915)	New York	<b>Invasion:</b> Henrietta's proxemic invasion of Steve's working-place (physical occupation and through stage properties: Henrietta's books, papers, and writing material). Mabel, attempted invasion through costume and verbal references.
<i>Trifles</i> (1916)	Midwest	<b>Pioneer Myth revisited.</b> Female characters' <b>inability to move out</b> of the farm. Proxemic relations, verbal references, visually/symbolically (rocker, quilt). <b>Invasion:</b> Male characters physically invade women's place and spoil women's work (dirty towels).
<i>The Outside</i> (1917)	Provincetown	Female characters' ability to move <b>questioned</b> verbally by male characters: Mrs. Patrick/life-savers. <b>Invasion:</b> male characters invade Mrs. Patrick's house.
<i>Close the Book</i> (1918)	Midwest	Female characters' ability to move <b>questioned</b> verbally by male characters: Grandmother/Peyton. <b>Racially-marked</b> as "Other": Jhansi. New Woman who does not move. Verbal references and proxemic relations.
<i>Bernice</i> (1919)	New England	Absent protagonist's <b>inability to move out</b> . Visual and verbal references. Margaret's freedom of movement vs. Laura.

TITLE	GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION	REVISION OF AMERICAN MYTH OF MOBILITY
<i>Chains of Dew</i> (1920)	New York Midwest	Female characters' ability to move <b>questioned</b> verbally by male characters: Dotty and Mother/Seymore. The New Woman, Nora, moves out. <b>Displaced character</b> . <b>Invasion</b> of place through stage properties (books, posters) proxemic relations, and verbal references.
<i>Inheritors</i> (1921)	Midwest	<b>Pioneer Myth</b> . Place of women through Grandmother Morton: verbal references and proxemic relations. Tied to the farm. <b>“City upon the Hill”</b> and <b>“Melting Pot”</b> revisited: <b>Racially-marked as “Others”</b> : Hindu students, Mediterranean immigrants, African Americans and Native Americans. Physical absence ( <b>symbolic marginalisation</b> ), but presence through stage properties and verbal references. Madeline: physically goes to jail, verbally <b>menaced</b> by her father for defending “Others.”
<i>The Verge</i> (1921)	New England	Elizabeth: New Woman who does <b>not move</b> . Verbal references and looks.

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION</b>	<b>REVISION OF AMERICAN MYTH OF MOBILITY</b>
<i>The Comic Artist</i> (1927)	Provincetown	<b>Displaced characters</b> move out: Luella and Nina, though, proxemics, gestures, looks, and verbal references. No home for displaced characters, and fear of solitude (proxemics, verbal references and the symbol of cards).
<i>Alison's House</i> (1930)	Midwest	<b>Displaced character</b> moves out: Elsa, punished proxemically and verbally. <b>Failed homecoming.</b>
<i>Springs Eternal</i> (1943)	New York State	<b>Displaced character</b> moves out: Jumbo, punished proxemically and verbally. <b>Failed homecoming.</b>

TITLE	GEODICHOTOMIES
<i>Suppressed Desires</i> (1915)	<b>Orders of territoriality:</b> Steve's space vs. Henrietta's space. Marked by pieces of furniture, stage properties, and proxemic relations in their spaces.
<i>Trifles</i> (1916)	<p><b>Isolation: Physical:</b> geographical location of the farm (down in a hollow) and climate.</p> <p><b>Symbolic:</b> characters' alienation.</p> <p><b>Home as prison:</b> physically (entrapping farm), symbolically (prison images: canary, cage), proxemically (women's activities inside the farm trap them in).</p> <p><b>Inside:</b> negative.</p>
<i>The Outside</i> (1917)	<p><b>Isolation: Physical:</b> geographical location of the old life-saving station.</p> <p><b>Symbolic:</b> female characters' need to be left alone.</p> <p><b>Home a shelter.</b> Visual identification character/set, verbal defence of one's place.</p> <p><b>Inside and Outside melt:</b> negative for most of the play.</p>



TITLE	GEODICHOTOMIES
<i>Close the Book</i> (1918)	<p><b>Home as prison</b> for Jhansi: symbolically (prison image of walls), proxemic relations (wanting to move out).  <b>Inside:</b> negative for Jhansi.</p> <p><b>Home as shelter</b> for The Roots: visually, proxemic relations and verbal references (this is the place where they feel themselves).  <b>Inside:</b> positive for the Roots.</p>
<i>Bernice</i> (1919)	<p><b>Isolation: Physical:</b> geographical location of the house (woods).  <b>Symbolic:</b> female protagonist's alienation.</p> <p><b>Home as prison</b> for Bernice: symbolically trapped in the house.  <b>Unlocalized offstage prison.</b></p>
<i>Chains of Dew</i> (1920)	<p><b>Home as prison:</b> verbally for Seymore and Dotty; proxemically and spatially only for Dotty and Mother.  <b>Inside:</b> negative.  <b>Unlocalized offstage prison.</b></p>
<i>Inheritors</i> (1921)	<p><b>Isolation: Physical:</b> location of the farm (opposite to town) and the college (up).  <b>Symbolic:</b> some characters' isolationist behaviour.</p> <p><b>Home as prison</b> for Madeline: verbal references, symbolically and proxemic relations (recreation of cell).  <b>Unlocalized offstage prison.</b></p> <p><b>Home as shelter</b> for Ira: verbal references and proxemic relations.  <b>Inside:</b> negative for Madeline, positive for other characters but Madeline.</p>

TITLE	GEODICHOTOMIES
<i>The Verge</i> (1921)	<p><b>Isolation: Physical:</b> house difficult to reach because of climate.</p> <p><b>Symbolic:</b> female protagonist's need to feel alienated.</p> <p><b>Home intended as shelter but becomes a prison</b> for Claire: verbal references, symbolically (prison images: cave, chains) and spatially (doors, keys, walls).</p> <p><b>Inside:</b> negative for Claire (inside means the house, family, society, tradition). Positive for the other characters.</p> <p><b>Outside:</b> positive for Claire (images: hill, sea, gutter, air). But only a utopian dream.</p> <p><b>Inside and Outside as a continuum</b>, visually (glass).</p>
<i>The Comic Artist</i> (1927)	<p><b>Isolation: Physical:</b> geographical location of the house.</p> <p><b>Symbolic:</b> female protagonist's need to be isolated to keep her place.</p> <p><b>Home as shelter</b> for Eleanor (need to be protected).</p>
<i>Alison's House</i> (1930)	<p><b>Isolation: Physical:</b> secluded house (far location, trees, and river).</p> <p><b>Symbolic:</b> absent protagonist's feeling of isolation.</p> <p><b>Home as prison</b> for Agatha, Alison, Stanhope, Elsa, and Eben: verbal references, spatially and proxemically. <b>Inside</b> as negative for these characters.</p> <p><b>Home as shelter</b> for Agatha, and Louise: verbal references and proxemically. <b>Inside</b> as positive for them.</p>
<i>Springs Eternal</i> (1943)	<p><b>Isolation: Symbolic:</b> onstage characters' non-participation in WWII.</p>

TITLE	PAST AS BURDEN
<i>Close the Book</i> (1918)	<p><b>Heritage (Pioneers)</b>, determinant spatially (decoration of the room: books, portraits, traditional works of art, miniatures; genealogy book) and verbal references. “Comfortable” atmosphere through colours and lighting.</p> <p><b>Generational conflict:</b> Jhansi vs. Mrs. Root, Betsy and traditional/old characters. Verbal and proxemic conflict.</p>
<i>Bernice</i> (1919)	<p><b>Generational conflict:</b> Margaret (New Woman) vs. Laura (traditional woman). Verbal conflict.</p>
<i>Chains of Dew</i> (1920)	<p><b>Tradition</b>, determinant spatially (decoration of the room), verbal references, and confirmed through <b>performativity</b>.</p> <p><b>Generational conflict:</b> Dotty, Nora and Mother (New Women) vs. Mrs. McIntyre (traditional woman). Verbal, proxemic, and costume conflict.</p>
<i>Inheritors</i> (1921)	<p><b>Heritage (Pioneers)</b>, determinant spatially (decoration of the farm: old furniture, Lincoln’s portrait; and decoration of the college library: Silas’s portrait, Matthew Arnold’s book) and verbal references. Contrast between pioneer past and its evolution in subsequent acts. Negative for Madeline, for the way the other characters have manipulated this heritage.</p> <p><b>Generational conflict:</b> Madeline (New Woman) vs. older and younger characters with traditional ideas (Felix Fejevary the Second, Senator Lewis, Ira Morton, Horace, Emil, Doris and Fussie). Verbal and proxemic conflict.</p>
<i>The Verge</i> (1921)	<p><b>Heritage (Pilgrim Fathers)</b>, determinant through verbal references. And Claire’s <b>rejection of traditional art</b> (Blake vs. Sistine Madonna).</p> <p><b>Generational conflict:</b> Claire (New Woman) vs. Adelaide (traditional woman) and Elizabeth (fallen New Woman). Verbal and proxemic conflict.</p>

TITLE	PAST AS BURDEN
<i>The Comic Artist</i> (1927)	<p><b>Heritage (Pilgrim Fathers)</b>, determinant spatially (decoration of the room: pieces of furniture, lantern, jar, wooden potato-masher) and through verbal references.</p> <p><b>Generational conflict:</b> Eleanor (older woman) vs. Luella and Nina (displaced and lost modern women). Verbal and proxemic conflict.</p>
<i>Alison's House</i> (1930)	<p><b>Tradition</b>, determinant spatially (decoration of the room, dark colours), linguistically, and confirmed through <b>performativity</b>.</p> <p><b>Generational conflict:</b> Elsa, Ann, and Eben vs. Stanhope.</p>
<i>Springs Eternal</i> (1943)	<p><b>Generational conflict:</b> Jumbo vs. Owen. Verbal and proxemic conflict.</p>

TITLE	IMAGERY OF DEATH
<i>Trifles</i> (1916)	<p><b>Home as grave:</b> spatial location of the farm.</p> <p><b>Deaths:</b> John (offstage) and canary (onstage). Minnie metaphorically dead.</p> <p><b>Buried child image:</b> Mrs. Peters's dead child, Minnie's unborn child.</p> <p><b>Haunted place:</b> Minnie's presence on the farm (visually, through her stage properties: towels, pans, bread, preserves, quilt, canary, rocking chair, costume - verbally and through the other characters' proxemic relation to this place and stage properties).</p>
<i>The Outside</i> (1917)	<p><b>Home as grave:</b> dead sailor (partially onstage). Mrs. Patrick and Allie buried to life. Visually: burial imagery on the outside (sand and grass). Verbal references and proxemic relations.</p>
<i>Close the Book</i> (1918)	<p><b>Places of war:</b> American Revolution, armed conflicts with Native Americans, and Civil War (related to tradition).</p>
<i>Bernice</i> (1919)	<p><b>Home as grave:</b> Bernice's corpse in adjoining room.</p> <p><b>Buried child image:</b> Bernice's abortion and Margaret's unborn child.</p> <p><b>Haunted place:</b> Bernice's presence in the house (visually, through her stage properties: table, flowers, cushions – verbal references and through the other characters' proxemic relation to this place and stage properties).</p>
<i>Chains of Dew</i> (1920)	<p><b>House as grave:</b> linguistically referred to as a "cemetery."</p> <p>Seymore's <b>poem</b> about dead woman.</p> <p><b>Buried child image:</b> unborn child in Birth Control campaign (verbally: arguments on the issue, case of Ireland, and birth control hymn; visually though stage properties: leaflets, posters and family exhibit).</p>

TITLE	IMAGERY OF DEATH
<i>Inheritors</i> (1921)	<p><b>Buried child image:</b> Grandmother Morton's memories.</p> <p><b>Places of war:</b> American Revolution, Civil War, Black Hawk War, and World War I (verbally, visually through costume and stage properties: muskets and Lincoln's portrait).</p>
<i>The Verge</i> (1921)	<p><b>Buried child image:</b> David.</p> <p><b>Places of war:</b> argument about the possibilities of war.</p>
<i>The Comic Artist</i> (1927)	<b>Death:</b> Karl (onstage).
<i>Alison's House</i> (1930)	<p><b>Home as grave:</b> spatial location of the house. Decoration of the library (dead ancestors' portraits) and darkness.</p> <p><b>Deaths:</b> Alison (offstage) and Agatha (onstage).</p> <p><b>Haunted place:</b> Alison's presence in the house (visually, through her stage properties: books, documents, poems, portrait - verbally and through the other characters' proxemic relation to this place and stage properties).</p>
<i>Springs Eternal</i> (1943)	<b>Places of war:</b> World War II (verbal references and arguments).

TITLE	DISORDER	ADDICTIONS
<i>Suppressed Desires</i> (1915)	Disordered apartment: Henrietta's books and pieces of paper on the floor and table.	
<i>Trifles</i> (1916)	Disordered kitchen: Minnie's kitchen belongings.	
<i>The Comic Artist</i> (1927)		Luella <b>smokes</b> compulsively.
<i>Alison's House</i> (1930)	Disordered living-room: books, newspapers, documents, tea-set, etc.	Eben <b>drinks</b> (possibility).

## APPENDIX 2. CHART OF ANALYSIS OF PRINCIPLES OF DEPARTURE IN SUSAN GLASPELL'S PLAYS

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>PHYSICAL DEPARTURE FROM LOCATION</b>
<i>Trifles</i> (1916)	Minnie, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters: leaving the farm (verbal references and proxemic relations).
<i>Close the Book</i> (1918)	Jhansi and Peyton's unfulfilled wish (verbal references): open road.
<i>Bernice</i> (1919)	Bernice: death as liberation and means to achieve power.
<i>Chains of Dew</i> (1920)	Dotty can go to New York (verbal promise).
<i>Inheritors</i> (1921)	Madeline: leaving the farm and Morton College (verbal references and proxemics).
<i>Alison's House</i> (1930)	Elsa had left the house (though this is questioned verbally and proxemically). The Stanhopes will leave the house. Agatha: death as liberation.

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>MAKING OTHERS DEPART</b>
<i>Suppressed Desires</i> (1915)	Henrietta makes Mabel leave (verbal references).
<i>Trifles</i> (1916)	Minnie allegedly murders John (verbal references).
<i>The Outside</i> (1917)	Mrs. Patrick's unfulfilled demand that the male characters leave her house (verbal references).
<i>Chains of Dew</i> (1920)	Seymore expels Nora, O'Brien and Leon (verbal references).
<i>The Verge</i> (1921)	Claire murders Tom (proxemics).
<i>The Comic Artist</i> (1927)	Eleanor's unfulfilled wish (verbal references).

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>SUBVERSION OF POWER GEOMETRY</b>	<b>WOMEN'S COALITION</b>
<i>Suppressed Desires</i> (1915)	Henrietta occupies physically Steve's territory.	
<i>Trifles</i> (1916)	Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters become self-aware of their power (verbal references, gestures, and proxemics).	Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters.
<i>The Outside</i> (1917)		Allie and Mrs. Patrick.
<i>Bernice</i> (1919)	Bernice superior to the other characters (verbally and visually).	Abbie and Margaret.
<i>Chains of Dew</i> (1920)	Dotty and Mother deceive Seymore (verbally, gestures).	Dotty and Mother.

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>RE-SHAPING HOME PHYSICALLY</b>
<i>Suppressed Desires</i> (1915)	Henrietta: her books onstage (proxemics).
<i>Bernice</i> (1919)	Craig, Father, Abbie and Margaret re-arrange the room as Bernice had it (verbal references and proxemic relations). "Freeing" Bernice: open door (visual).
<i>Chains of Dew</i> (1920)	Dotty: taking down the Sistine Madonna, hanging posters for Birth Control, family exhibit. Dotty changes her appearance too: bobbed hair. Dotty changes the way she moves around the room, and her new performativity (verbal references and proxemic relations). Holes in the wall: remaining symbol of Dotty's new identity in the house. Seymore: the room is finally back to its previous shape. Sistine Madonna is back, and posters go out.



<b>TITLE</b>	<b>DEPARTURE THROUGH ART</b>
<i>Trifles</i> (1916)	Minnie's quilt and participation in choir: Modernist artist.
<i>Chains of Dew</i> (1920)	Mother's dolls. Seymore's poems.
<i>The Verge</i> (1921)	Claire's plants as new forms of art.
<i>Alison's House</i> (1930)	Alison's poems.

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>DEPARTURE THROUGH NATURE</b>
<i>The Outside</i> (1917)	Reading the Outside as life. Allie's body language: her arm becomes the safe harbour/shelter Mrs. Patrick needs.
<i>Inheritors</i> (1921)	Sharing the land: Silas gives the hill (verbal references and visually). Corn image: freedom and mixture of people in the idyllic location (verbal references and proxemic relations).
<i>Alison's House</i> (1930)	Freeing Alison through Elsa's body language: Alison as a bird and wind.

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>GENERATION PROBLEM SOLVED</b>
<i>Close the Book</i> (1918)	Finding support in older generations (verbal references and proxemic relations: handling the genealogy book, and support in ancestors seen as “crevices in the walls of respectability”).
<i>Inheritors</i> (1921)	Madeline finds support in pioneers (verbal references and visually, through the repetition of movements in the same places, handling the same stage properties).
<i>Alison’s House</i> (1930)	Stanhope and Elsa: father and daughter (verbal references and proxemic relations). Stanhope, Eben, Elsa, Ann, and Ted’s final agreement: publishing Alison’s poems.
<i>Springs Eternal</i> (1943)	Toast to the Brave old World (verbal references and proxemic relations).

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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<sup>1</sup> I only include here the typescripts and drafts I discuss in this thesis.

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